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The Master of an Evil Name: Hillel Baʿal Shem and His *Sefer ha-Ḥeshek*

by

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern

I. Introduction: the Manuscript

Back in 1993, as senior librarian at the Vernadsky Library in Kiev, Ukraine, in charge of cataloguing a newly uncovered Judaica collection, I came across an enigmatic manuscript entitled *Sefer ha-ḥeshek.* It did not match the bulk of the Judaica holdings.[1] Nor did it fit in Abraham Harkavy's collection of medieval manuscripts.[2] It was too Ashkenazic for Abraham Firkovich's Karaite papers,[3] and too

I am grateful to Arthur Green and Jonathan Sarna, who have read previous drafts of this paper and generously shared with me their criticism. I am especially grateful to Zeʾev Gries and Moshe Rosman, whose invaluable comments helped me to improve the final draft.

1. On the fascinating fate and composition of this collection, see Zachary Baker, "History of the Jewish Collections at the Vernadsky Library in Kiev," *Shofar* 10 no. 4 (1992): 31–48; Binyamin Lukin, "Archive of the Historical and Ethnographic Society. History and Present Condition," *Jews in Eastern Europe,* 1 no. 20 (Jerusalem, 1993): 45–61; Yohanan Petrovsky, "Zapisnye knigi evreiskikh obshchestv na Ukraine. Iz arkhiva A. Ia. Garkavi," *Novyi Krug* 2 (Kiev, 1992): 274–288; Nikolai Senchenko and Irina Sergeeva, "Jewish Scholarly Institutions and Library Collections in Kiev after 1917: A Brief Historical Sketch," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 2 (1991): 45–50; Mykola Senchenko and Iryna Serheeva, "Z istorii formuvannia kolektsii evreiskoii literatury Tsentralʾnoi Naukovoi Biblioteky im. Vernadsʾkoho Akademii Nauk URSR," *Svit. Chasopys Narodnoho Rukhu Ukrainy* 2–3 (1991): 64–67. The only in-depth description of the collection, together with a preliminary list of some two hundred manuscripts, is given in Dov Walfish, "ʾOsef ha-sefarim ve-kitvei ha-yad be-sifriyat vernadsky be-kiev," *Madaʿei ha-yahadut* 34 (1994): 68–86.

2. Abraham Harkavy (Abram Iakovlevich Garkavi, 1835–1919), the founder of Russian Judaica and Hebraica, was in charge of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts at the St. Petersburg Imperial Library, responsible for cataloguing and acquisitions. A follower of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Harkavy overlooked kabbalistic works, concentrating chiefly on Spanish-Jewish literature of the Golden Age. On Harkavy's manuscript collection, see Yohanan Petrovsky, "The Lost Chapter of Russian Judaica: Abraham Harkavy's MSS in The Vernadsky Library collection," *Jews and Slavs* 5 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1996), 157–168.

3. Abraham Firkovich (1786–1874), a Karaite communal leader, traveler, *sui generis* historian of Karaism and author of the most well-known ninteenth-century manuscript forgeries, amassed a significant collection of Genizah fragments and Karaite manuscripts, which he sold shortly before his death to the St. Petersburg Imperial Library. See V. L. Vikhnovich, *Karaim Avraam Firkovich: evreiskie rukopisi, istoriia, puteshestviia* (St. Petersburg: "Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie," 1997).

early for most of S. Ansky's nineteenth-century folkloric materials.[4] The manuscript had a wooden cover, separate from the text, with a copper monogram *Sefer ha-ḥeshek* in Hebrew (hereafter—*SH*). *SH*'s title appears randomly as a running head; the author occasionally refers to the title of the manuscript.[5] Primarily because of its size—411 folios, 23 of them blank, some 760 filled pages altogether—and due to its magical contents, I discarded any attempts to identify the manuscript as a version of the well-known *Sefer ha-ḥeshek*, a twenty-or-so-page kabbalistic treatise on the names of the archangel Metatron attributed to Isaac Luria.[6] Also, since the manuscript is not a commentary on the book of Isaiah or Proverbs, it could neither be Solomon Duran's nor Solomon ha-Levi's *Ḥeshek shelomoh*.[7]

The manuscript is strongly reminiscent of a lost Yiddish book on practical Kabbalah and folk medicine entitled *Sefer ḥeshek,* apparently written at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the doctor Wolf Binyamin ben Ẓevi Hirsch from Posen, who studied medicine at the University of Frankfurt am Oder and purportedly published his composition in 1727 in Hanau.[8] Like the Hanau book, the newly discovered *SH* drew heavily from popular Kabbalah and folk medicine. Yet, unlike the Hanau one, it was Hebrew, not Yiddish; it claimed a different authorship (not Wolf Binyamin); it was composed in East Europe and not in Germany; and it seemed much more complex than its Hanau prototype. In addition, nobody has seen the Hanau book since the early eighteenth century,[9] if indeed it ever existed as a book. Shatzky, who himself never saw the Hanau *SH*, which is not listed either in the Friedberg, Benjacob, or Vinograd catalogues, reconstructed its contents through oblique references to its sources mentioned in Steinschneider, who did not see the book either. Though it is possible that the newly discovered *SH* in terms of its title and genre is somehow related to the lost Yiddish medical tractate, the com-

4. Semion Ansky (Shloyme Zanvl Rapoport, 1863–1920), a Russian-Jewish and Yiddish writer, populist, *Kulturtreger,* and ethnographer, amassed several hundred Judaica manuscripts during his expedition to the Pale of Jewish Settlement in Russia between 1911 and 1914. On Ansky's expedition and the materials he collected, see V. Lukin, "Ot narodnichestva k narodu (S. A. Ansky–etnograf vostochnoevropeiskogo evreistva)," in *Trudy po iudaike: istoriia i etnografiia* 3, ed. Dmitrii Eliashevich (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskii evreiskii universitet, 1993), 125–161; Aleksandr Kantsedikas and Irina Sergeeva, *Albom khudozhestvennoi stariny Semiona An-skogo* (Moscow and Jerusalem: Mosty kul'tury-Gesharim, 2001); Rivka Gonen, ed., *Ba-ḥazarah la-ʿayarah. Ansky ve-ha-mishlaḥat ha-etnografit ha-yehudit 1912–1914* (Jerusalem: Museon Israel, 1994); Avram Rekhtman, *Yidishe etnografie un folklor: zikhroynes vegn der etnografisher ekspeditsie, angefirt fun Sh. Ansky* (Buenos-Aires: Yidishe wisnshaftlekher institut, 1958). See also the forthcoming collection of articles *Between Two Worlds: Ansky and Russian-Jewish Culture*, ed. Gabriella Safran and Steven Zipperstein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

5. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Orientalia Department, Judaica Manuscript collection, *Sefer ha-ḥeshek*, [OR. 178], f. 14b, 18b–19a, 28b–29a.

6. I used the Lemberg reprint (1865) of the first Yiẓḥak Meir Epshtein edition (Jerusalem, 1865). Because of the size of the manuscript I also ruled out the possibility of identifying *SH* as Yohanan Aliman's *Sefer shaʿar ha-ḥeshek* (Livorno, 1690).

7. First publication correspondingly—Venice, 1588, and Saloniki, 1600.

8. Jacob Shatzky, "Sefer ḥeshek: a farfaln refu'oh-bukh in yiddish fun 18tn yorhundert un zayn mekhaber," *YIVO Bleter* 4 (1932): 223–235.

9. Ibid., 223.

parison between an unknown manuscript and an unseen book will hardly be helpful.

This *SH* is an in *quarto* manuscript written on a plain paper without watermarks. It has a leather spine and no back cover. The worn, greasy edges of the paper signify that the manuscript had been not only in use, but in intensive use. The author's consistent yet awkward early-eighteenth-century Ashkenazic semicursive script, different from the contemporary rabbinic script,[10] along with his occasional Hebrew misspellings, is telling.[11] Apparently, he was not a learned rabbi and not a rabbinical scholar (*talmid ḥakham*), although he had access to an amazingly broad gamut of books both known and unknown to us. The name of the author—Hillel Baʿal Shem—appears throughout the manuscript.[12] The dates scattered in the text did not go beyond 1739 or 1740. According to the quality of the paper, the ink, and the script, *SH* was written most likely ca. 1740–1741, since at that time a regular consumer purchased paper in order to use it, not stock it, and the last date mentioned in *SH* is 1739/1740. The manuscript is complete. It opens with the words "And these are 32 rules against 32 paths of wisdom"[13] and ends with the words "these are the words of Hillel."[14] Hillel wrote mostly in Hebrew, rarely in Yiddish, inserting clumsy Slavic (Polish and Ukrainian) incantations, which he transliterated in Hebrew characters. In addition, Hillel illuminated his manuscript with some ninety drawings of kabbalistic amulets and anthropomorphic and traditional Jewish symbols, as well as diagrams, tables, and series of magical signs.[15] Some of them were copies from contemporary books on practical Kabbalah already published, whereas others were unique.[16]

10. For the mid-eighteenth-century calligraphy, see the facsimile reproduction from the manuscript written by one of the colleagues of the Besht: Dov Baer mi-Mezrich, *Magid devarav le-yaʿakov*, ed. Avraham Yiẓḥak Kahn (Jerusalem: Yeshivat toldot aharon, 1971), 6 (unpaginated). See also later eighteenth-century calligraphy in the Yehoshua Mondshine faximile edition of the Ḥabad copy of "In Praise of the Besht" by Dov Baer ben Samuel of Linits: *Shivḥei ha-besht: faksimil mi-ktav ha-yad ha-yeḥidi ha-nodaʿ lanu ve-shinuyei nusḥav leʿumat nusaḥ ha-defus: be-ẕeruf ve-nispaḥim* (Jerusalem: Y. Mondshine, 1982). Cf. handwritten late-eighteenth-century documents and letters by Levy Yiẓḥak from Berdichev in *Kedushat levy ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Zeev Derbarimdiker, 1978), 576, 578, 580 (unpaginated); the handwritten commentary on the *Zohar* (parashat *Shelaḥ*) by Vilna Gaon, in Yeshayahu Vinograd, *ʾOẓar sifrei hagr"a* (Jerusalem: Keren Eliyahu, 2003), 357.

11. Although *SH* was written by one and the same person, it contained a number of pages by a different hand. Apparently, the author commissioned them to a professional Torah scroll scribe; see f. 239b–251a.

12. *SH*, f. 1b, 162b, 206a, 216b, 329a, 355b, 389a.

13. *SH*, f. 1b. Hillel is using a popular kabbalistic metaphor of 32 paths of wisdom that dates back to *Sefer Yeẓirah* 1:1, *Zohar*, "Terumah," 106; *Pardes rimonim*, shaʿar 12: 2. It was also known to the kabbalists of *ḥug ha-ʿiyun,* see Mark Verman, *The Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 45 n. 43, 52, 71 n. 103, 75 n. 122, 152.

14. Apparently a concluding talmudic cliché [*ad kan divrei Hillel*]. *SH*, f. 389a.

15. See, for example, *SH*, f. 17b, 18a, 34b, 35a, 37b–38a, 47b, 85b, 89a, 96a, 112a–113b, 156b, 204b–205b. The most amazing are the anthropomorphic amulets that establish the links between kabbalistic abbreviations and members of the human body; see f. 215b and 217b. The amulets and diagrams that appear in *SH* as well as the linguistic strategies of Hillel will be discussed elsewhere.

16. For the comprehensive list of the Judaic amulets that includes the list of specific kabbalis-

Moshe Rosman, who saw *SH* (and encouraged me to write this essay) has dubbed it "the most extensive exposition of *baʿal shem* techniques and experiences that I know of."[17] It is common knowledge that *baʿal shem* stands for "master of the Names of God," or, as Gershon Hundert suggested, "Manipulators of the Name,"[18] and signifies a Jewish magician or healer, engaged in practical Kabbalah and able to use his mystical knowledge and theurgical powers to produce protecting amulets that neutralize evil and restore psychological and social order among the healer's clientele.[19] The term became particularly popular after Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1700–1760) adopted the name of Baʿal Shem Tov (the Besht), the Master of a Good Name, and eventually came to be seen as the founder of modern Hasidism. A number of books illustrating practices of baʿalei shem were published before and after *SH* was written, yet *SH* exceeds all of them in terms of the historical, social, cultural, and theological data it contains.[20] More astonishing was

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tic abbreviations, see Eli Davis and David Frenkel, *Ha-kameyaʿ ha-ʿivri* (Jerusalem: Makhon lemadaʿei ha-yahadut, 1995).

17. Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for Historical Baʿal Shem Tov* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 217–218 n. 19.

18. Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 142.

19. For the analysis of intellectual and theological aspects of *baʿalei shem*, see Immanuel Etkes, "Magiyah u-vaʿalei shem be-yamav shel ha-besht," in *Baʿal ha-shem: ha-besht—magiyah, mistikah, hanhagah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2000), 15–53; idem, "Mekomam shel ha-magiyah u-vaʿalei ha-shem ba-ḥevrah ha-ashkenazit be-mifneh ha-meʾot ha-yud-zayin—ha-yud-ḥet," *Ẓion* 60 (1995): 69–104. For the analysis of the genre of the books ascribed to various *baʿalei shem*, see Hagit Matras, "Sifrei segulot u-refuʾot be-ʿivrit: tekhanim u-mekorot al pi ha-sefarim ha-rishonim asher yaẓu laʾor beʾeropah be-reshit ha-meʾah ha-18" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997); Gedalyah Nigal focused on the folkloric aspect of the writings by *baʿalei shem* in his *Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism* (Northvale, NJ and London: J. Aronson, 1994); Michal Oron analyzed the sabbatean context of one of the most prominent *baʿalei shem* in her "Dr. Samuel Falk and the Eibeschuetz-Emden Controversy," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium held in Frankfurt A.M. 1991*, ed. Karl Grözinger and Joseph Dan (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 242–256. Oron also published important documents on and of the Baʿal Shem from London. These include letters, description of their books, ethical wills, and diaries. See Michal Oron, *Mi-"baʿal shed" le-"baʿal shem:" shmuel falk, "ha-baʿal shem mi-london"* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2002). Zeʾev Gries contextualized popular Kabbalah books written by East European *baʿalei shem* integrating them into the genre of *regimen vitae* (conduct) literature that regulates everyday behavioral patterns, prescribes attitudes and remedies, and establishes links between the tradition and popular customs. Gries also connected the popularization of practical Kabbalah with the rise of interest in hermeneutic studies and medicine triggered by the Florentine renaissance neoplatonic academy. See Zeʾev Gries, *Sifrut ha-hanhagot: toldoteha u-mekomah be-ḥayei ḥasidei r. yisraʾel baʿal shem tov* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990). For the most convincing sociocultural typology of the *baʿalei shem* in the context of social anthropology, see Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 13–19. For the recent standard summary of the *baʿalei shem* and the books they produced, see Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 142–153. Cf.: *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Encyclopedia Judaica, 1972), s.v. "Baʿalei shem"; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Cleveland-Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1939).

20. Cf.: *Raziʾel ha-malʾakh* (Amsterdam, 1701), *Shem tov katan* (Sulzbach, 1706), *Sefer karnayim* (Żółkiew, 1709), *Mifʿalot ʾelokim* (Żółkiew, 1710, 1724 and 1725), *Toldot ʾadam* (Żółkiew, 1720), *Kerenʾor* (Żółkiew, 1721), *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* (Żółkiew, 1722), *Divrei ḥakhamim* (Żółkiew, 1725). For the pioneering analysis of the genre of practical Kabbalah books, see Hagit Matras, "Sifrei segulot

that Hillel Baʿal Shem, unlike other *baʿalei shem* known to date, coincided in time and space with the Besht: they traveled through contiguous areas (Hillel in Volhynia and the Besht in Podol), and sometimes almost the same areas (Rovno district in Podol), and did so almost at the same time. Thus, the portrayal of Hillel Baʿal Shem against the backdrop of early-eighteenth-century East European itinerant healers, the comparison and the differentiation between the kabbalistic practices of Hillel Baʿal Shem and those of the Baʿal Shem Tov, and a discussion of the relations between Hillel and his own clientele are in order. Methodologically, this paper represents a slow reading of this eighteenth-century Kabbalah manuscript from the vantage point of the history of culture with special emphasis on the behavioral patterns of a *baʾal shem* vis-à-vis a Jewish community. This paper echoes the recent appeals to "reconsider the meaning of the *baʾal shem* tradition in the development of early Hasidism"[21] and to reassess such pivotal facets of the premodern East European cultural history as its popular kabbalistic subculture.[22]

II. Hillel's Curriculum Vitae

SH, our only source on Hillel, is a complex document. In it, first and foremost, Hillel is trying to demonstrate his expertise in practical Kabbalah. He spends hundreds of pages discussing how to use holy names (*shemot ha-kedushah*) and impure names (*shemot ha-tumʾah*) in order to stop epidemics (14a, 20a); treat a sick child (23b); prevent epilepsy, dizziness, craziness, headache, and night fear (24a–b, 159b, 279b); treat fever, wounds, pollution, diarrhea, insomnia and bad smell from the mouth (117a, 145b, 254a, 255b, 260a–b, 295a,); expel evil forces from the house (31b, 296b–297b); protect a feeding (32a–b, 267a); cure a barren woman (166a, 178a–b), regulate menstruation (168b–169a, 262b–264b) and heartbeating (274b–275a, 278a); prevent evil forces from harming a newly born child (270a); keep healthy dietary laws (107b); stop girls' hair from growing (145b); protect an individual and his habitat from an evil eye (156b, 293b, 385b), thieves (174a–b), fire (188b), bandits (293b), Lilith (329b); identify a thief through talking to a homunculus in a bottle (163a–164a); and other things indispensable in

u-refuot be-ʿivrit" (Ph.D.diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997) and Haviva Pedaya, "Le-hitpaṯuto shel ha-degem ha-ḥevrati-dati-kalkali ba-ḥasidut: ha-pidyon, ha-ḥavurah, veha-ʿaliyah le-regel," in *Dat ve-kalkalah: yaḥasei gomlin*, ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 1995), 311–373. Most recent discoveries corroborate the fact that *SH* occupies a unique place among seventeenth- and eighteenth-century East European writings on practical Kabbalah. Thus, for instance, in 1996, Moshe Rosenfeld from Jerusalem (the author of a number of book catalogues on early Hebrew print) briefly introduced me to an untitled manuscript apparently written by the *baʿal shem* from Tomashpol (Ukraine). The size of the manuscript did not exceed 80 pages. Its content to some extent resembled the content of *SH*. However, unlike the often used *SH*, the clean white paper and the overall physical condition of that manuscript (especially edges and corners of the pages), testified to its rare use by the owner or its readers. In addition, the amount of practical Kabbalah information included in the manuscript of the *baʿal shem* from Tomashpol falls short in comparison with *SH*.

21. Karl Grözinger, "Tsadik and Baʾal Shem in East European Hasidism," *Polin* 15 (2002): 162.

22. Moshe Rosman, "A Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish Cultural History," *JSIJ (Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal)* [Bar-Ilan University] 1 (2002): 126. See http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/1–2002/Rosman.pdf (accessed 11/7/04).

practical life. Also, Hillel shows his profound knowledge of chiromancy and metoposcopy (70b–73a, 200b–201a); exorcism (192b, 197a–198b); witchcraft (194a–197b); origins of evil (302b–310a); levitation (312a); and horoscopy (247b–251a). Proving he is a pious and observant Jew, Hillel demonstrates his knowledge of major kabbalistic concepts, which he consistently tries to connect to various Jewish practices such as daily prayer (168b), confessional prayer (169b), healing prayer (347b–348a), bed-time prayer (369b–370a), philanthropy (150a), family purity (174a–b), observing Shabbat laws (305a), celebrating secondary holidays such as Hanukah (247b–250a), giving oaths (314b) and Torah study (181a, 184b, 186a–187b). Particularly significant is that in *SH* Hillel provides—though not abundantly and not consistently—the details of his life, his career and its ups and downs, his *modus operandi*, his connections to the world of rabbis and doctors, his attitudes to colleagues, his feedback to the popularization of Kabbalah and kabbalistic bookprint, his personal *modus vivendi*, and the attitude of his contemporaries toward him. What follows is a tentative reconstruction of Hillel's life based on data scattered throughout the manuscript.

Slavic words in his lexicon[23] as well as Yiddish permeated with Slavicisms[24] would suggest that perhaps the author of *SH* was born in Eastern or Central Poland. Since he started to be active as a practical kabbalist and a healer around the 1730s, I assume he was either five to ten years older or younger than the Besht, born ca. 1700, or was of his age and was born most likely between 1690 and 1705. *SH* contains no reference to his birthplace or to the name of his father. Given Hillel's attempt to tell his own life story and demonstrate his mastery of kabbalistic arts, his reticence in regard to his origins is noteworthy. Perhaps Hillel was trying to, as Oscar Wilde put it, "reveal the art and conceal the artist." Apparently, Hillel had good reasons to do this.

Perhaps at the end of the 1720s and in the early 1730s, when he began his career as a professional healer, magician, and Kabbalist, Hillel called himself the Baʿal Shem, the Master of Name (I doubt he needed the name, indicative of his profession, before that time). Apparently he came from a lower-middle-class Polish-Jewish family unable to provide him with full-time rabbinic education. Unlike the famous Jewish doctor and kabbalist Tobias ha-Cohen (ca. 1652–1729)[25] and the scions of prominent Polish Jewish families,[26] Hillel did not study medicine at

23. He refers to Slavic, mostly to Ukrainian and Polish, to describe herbs (*polny tablan*, 7a; *majevy borsch*, 9a; *krapiva*, 147a; *gorchitsa*, 182a), birds or reptiles (*voroni*, 22b; *piavke*, 147b; *zozuli*, 204a). He also uses lengthy Polish-Ukrainian incantations transcribed in Hebrew letters, see 362a–364b. See, for instance, the following incantation in Polish (I retain Hebrew spelling): *Zive boze, pomoẓni, pomohi ten ohon ohniski i otruski, od silaiu, od glovi, ochi i od beloho kosti, od chervoni krev* (Living God, [my Helper], help [to take out] that poisoning fire of fires, out of [his/her] strength, out of [his/her] head, out of [his/her] eyes and white bones, 368a–369a).

24. See his Yiddish amulets and "dialogues" with the *dybbuks*, 166a–168b, 139b–241a, 349a-b.

25. See Abraham Levinson, *Tuvyah ha-rofeʾ ve-sifro 'maʿaseh tuvyah*' (Berlin: Rimon, 1924).

26. See "Lekarze Żydowscy w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej," in *Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej: działalność społeczna, gospodarscza, oświatowa i kulturalna,* ed. Ignacius Schiper et al., 2 vols. (Warsaw: "Żydzi w Polsce odrodzonej," 1932–33), 2:289–303.

the University of Padua or in one of the German universities. Yet, avid for the knowledge of medicine, he apprenticed with various professional doctors in Poland. Among his teachers Hillel refers once to Dr. Simḥah,[27] twice to the great sage and doctor Rabbi Yaʿakov Ẓilon [Ẓahalon],[28] and more than a dozen times to Isaac Fortis, "the great Rabbi and a great sage in all the countries of Poland."[29]

Abraham Isaac Fortis (dubbed also *Ḥazak*), a professional doctor from an Italian and Polish family of doctors and rabbis, probably studied at the University of Mantua.[30] He also spent some time learning Kabbalah under the famous Moshe Zakut (1620–1697).[31] He returned to Poland in the last decade of the seventeenth century, settled first in Lwów and later in Rzeszów, and established himself as a court doctor to two of the five wealthiest Polish noble families, Lubomirski and Potocki. Between 1726 and 1730 he held a position of the highest prestige when elected *parnas* at the Council of the Four Lands.[32] Hillel claimed he had learnt under Fortis, consulted his books and manuscripts, and copied Fortis's amulets and remedies.[33] He learned from Fortis rules of hygiene, both personal and public, particularly important in the context of the late 1730s epidemic of cholera in Podo-

27. Simḥah Menaḥem ben Yoḥanan Barukh de Yona (known as Emanuel de Jona, d. 1702)—a court doctor of the king Jan III Sobieski. Between 1664 and 1668, he studied medicine at the University of Padua, lived in Żółkiew and Lwów, and helped to solve communal disputes. He was accused of allegedly poisoning Jan III, but was found not guilty. His name, as well as remedies and amulets ascribed to him, are mentioned in a number of practical Kabbalah books, including *Maʿaseh tuvyah, Toldot ʾadam, Mifʿalot ʾelokim* and *Zevaḥ pesaḥ*. See, for example, *Mifʿalot ʾelokim*, simanim 9, 51, 52, 169, 297, 337, 346, 410, and 416. On Dr. Simḥah, see Salomon Buber, *Kiryah nisgavah* (Cracow, 1903), 76; Schiper, *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej,* 298–299; Natan Mikhael Gelber, "Toldot yehudei zolkiv," in *Sefer zolkiv [Żółkiew]: kiryah nisgavah,* Natan Mikhael Gelber and Israel Ben-Shem (Jerusalem; enẓiklopediyah shel galuyot, 1969), 43–45.

28. Most probably Dr. Yaʿakov Ẓahalon, a Jewish physician and rabbi from Rome, graduate from the University of Rome, and the author of an important seventeenth-century popular Hebrew "handbook for medical treatment" *ʾOẓar ha-ḥayim* (Venice, 1683). On Ẓahalon, see David Ruderman, *Science, Medicine, and Jewish Culture in Early Modern Europe. Spiegel Lectures in European Jewish History* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1987), 9, 15, and the bibliography he assembled on p. 28 n. 20; idem, "Medicine and Scientific Thought: The World of Tobias Cohen," in *The Jews of Early Modern Venice*, ed. Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 194–98; idem, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 232–235 and bibliography on p. 232 n. 10. Significantly, "Dr. Yaʿakov Ẓahalon], is also mentioned in *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* [3b]. For the references to *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* I used the only extant copy of this book at the rare book Judaica division of New York Public Library. I am grateful to Dr. Leonard Gold for his assistance.

29. *SH*, f. 12b, 13b, 25a, 46a, 183b. Hillel says, for example: *segulah mi-rofe mumḥeh ha-nikra ha-ravr. yiẓḥak fortis*, 46a; *od kibalti min rofe ḥazak*, 183b.

30. Moshe Rosman, *The Lord' Jews: Magnate-Jewish relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press for Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1990), 148 and bibliography he assembled in n. 20; Schiper, *Żydzi w Polsce Odrodzonej,* 299–300.

31. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "I[srael] Ha[lpern]."

32. Ibid.

33. Hillel was not unique in the reverent attitude to Fortis. For other references to Fortis's remedies and amulets, see *Mifʿalot ʾelokim*, siman 379; *Toldot ʾadam*, siman 101.

lia.[34] Medical references in *SH,* which exceed medical references in books by other *baʿalei shem*, substantiate Hillel's claim that he was an expert healer.[35]

Hillel seems to be familiar not only with kabbalistic texts and manuscripts but also with the pietistic rites of the kabbalists, perhaps even with Italian kabbalists.[36] While describing *tikkun leyl shabbat*, a midnight pietistic liturgy canonized by Lurianic kabbalists, he mentions it as part of "the customs of my friends in Venice and Prague" and urges others to follow it.[37] However, unlike the case of his medical contacts, he mentions no names of his friends-in-Kabbalah. This is yet another mysterious pattern of Hillel's writings. It appears as if he wanted to conceal their names. The 1720s were the years of a fierce battle against crypto-sabbateans from Altona to Prague and Zółkiew.[38] As a number of scholars have demonstrated, sometimes it was not feasible to draw the line separating regular kabbalists from crypto-sabbateans.[39] Was Hillel hinting at his proximity to the sublime mystical

34. Recommendations on public hygiene appear in *SH* on f. 13a–15b, 20a–22b. See the story about the 1654 (in fact, 1656—see Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery*, 232) epidemic in Rome which Hillel ascribed to Fortis, *SH*, f. 12b. Some primary knowledge of medical Latin, which Hillel demonstrates, may also have come from Fortis.

35. For example, when Hillel discusses different ways of preparing amulets or herbal remedies to treat melancholy (*marah sheḥorah*) he says that he learned this is from "professional doctors in the country of Poland," 6a–b; when he explains what should be done to a sick person, he recommends enema with milk and sugar and makes a double reference to Doctor Simḥah and Doctor Ẓilon [Ẓahalon], 23b; he claims he learned from Doctor Fortis how to protect human body from evil spirits, 25a; he says that Doctor Ẓalnik (?) taught him what measures to take in order to completely recover after having drunk a poison (*sam mavet*), 108a.

36. In the second half of the seventeenth century, Italy became a paramount European center of Kabbalah learning. It suffices to mention Moshe Zakut and his circle. For an analysis of Italian Kabbalah, see Moshe Idel, "Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah between 1560–1660," *Italia Judaica II* (1986): 243–262; Robert Bonfil, *Rabbis and Jewish Communities in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford University Press for the Littman Library, 1990), 280–298; idem., "Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis; Italian Jewry at the close of the sixteenth century," *Jewish History* 2–3 (1988): 11–30; Moshe Halamish, "ʿOd le-toldot ha-pulmus al ha-kabalah be-Italiyah be-reshit ha-meʾah ha-17," Peterburgskii evreiskii universitet, 9 vol. 3 (1986): 101–106.

37. *SH*, f. 187a. The question of whether Hillel was in direct contact with Italian (Venician) kabbalists must be left open due to the thin evidence.

38. Elisheva Carlebach, *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moshe Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 172–185; Gelber, "Toldot yehudei zolkiv," 96–104; Geshom Scholem. *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah,1626–1676* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 78–85; Moshe Arie Perlmuter, *Ha-rav yehonatan eybeschuez ve-yaḥaso le-shabtaʾut* (Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1947), 26–29, 42–49; Yehuda Liebes, "Ketavim ḥadashim be-kabalah shabtaʾit mi-ḥugo shel r. yehonatan eybeschuez," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Yosef Dan (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986), 141–349. For a broader context of the crypto-Sabbateanism, see Mortimer J. Cohen, *Jacob Emden: a man of controversy* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1937) and Jacob Schacter, "History and Memory of Self: the Autobiography of Rabbi Jacob Emden," in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach et al. (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 428–452. A useful summary is to be found in Michał Galas, "Sabbateanism in the Seventeenth-Century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: A Review of Sources," in *The Sabbatian Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism and Frankism*, ed. Rachel Elior (Jerusalem: The Institute of Jewish Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), 2:51–63.

39. Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy,* 11, 171–172.

knowledge while simultaneously hiding his personal relations with those who balanced on the brink of heresy? Be this as it may, before Hillel became a practicing *baʿal shem*, he traveled through Bohemia, Romania, and Bukovina. He claims to have visited Tiraspol,[40] Vissa,[41] and Rozhnu.[42] He recollects his sporadic meetings with an anonymous kabbalist from Rozhnu and claims he studied the manuscripts of a certain Efraim, a renowned preacher (*maggid mesharim*) and prominent kabbalist from Vissa (Bessarabia).[43]

Hillel was lucky to land under the wings of his tutor, Ẓevi Hirsh from Mezerich (Międzyrzec Podliaski).[44] Rabbi Ẓevi Hirsch (d. 1724), the head of the rabbinical court in Mezerich, could boast an impressive pedigree and learning. He was the son of R. Alexander and the grandson of Ẓevi Hirsch, the head of the rabbinic court in the same locality, who is mentioned in seventeenth-century response and who himself is the author of the volume of responsa *Torat ḥayim* (Lublin, 1708 and 1724); R. Ẓevi Hirsch was also the son-in-law of Rabbi Mordekhay, the head of the rabbinic court in Brisk (Brest of Lithuania) and the father of Mordekhay and Avishal, who eventually became rabbis of Lissa and Frankfurt, respectively.[45] Hillel asserts that he spent a certain period of time under Ẓevi Hirsch copying his manuscripts, talking to him, and learning from him the secrets of amulets and holy names.[46] Hillel's assertion is revealing from two perspectives. First, even if he did not mention how long he stayed in Mezerich, the mere fact that he studied under such an authority as Ẓevi Hirsch—in addition to Fortis—testifies to his thorough

40. Southeast from Jassy (Bessarabia), nowadays in Moldova, 188b.

41. Jassy District (Bessarabia), now in Moldova, 189a.

42. Bukovina, now in Ukraine, 189a.

43. Perhaps the travels of Hillel Baʿal Shem were part of a larger phenomenon of Jewish wanderers salient among East European Jews in the late-seventeenth-century and first half of the eighteenth century. Zeʾev Gries brings important references to the records of the council of Jews in Lithuania that specified types of beggars and vagabonds who were a burden for the Jewish communities in eastern Poland (*Pinkas medinat lita*, p. 33 sect. 130, p. 38 sect. 164, p. 53 sect. 250; p. 76 sect. 378; p. 133 sect. 559; p. 144 sect. 596). Depicting itinerant Jews, Gries includes in his list regular beggars as well as sabbatean and hasidic preachers and "prophets," regular vagabond teachers, fundraisers for Erets Yisrael, preachers of penitence (rebukers, *mokhiḥim*), and exorcists. See his review essay of Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching 1200–1800, An Anthology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 no. 1 (1994): 113–122, esp. 117–119.

44. Hillel identifies him as *ha-rav ha-gadol he-ḥasid ha-mefursam u-mekubal kavod moreynu ve-rabeinu ẓevi hirsh ben ha-rav ha-gadol moreynu ha-rav avram hu avraham av bet din be kehillah kedoshah mezirich be-medinat podlasye ha-samukh brisk de-lita ve-kehillah kedoshah tiktin ve-hu ḥatan mi-rav ha-gadol de-brisk kavod moreynu ha-rav mordekhay.* Hillel claims that Rabbi Ẓevi Hirsch was the highest authority in both revealed and esoteric law in the whole Podlasie area. In addition, Hillel refers to him as often as to Fortis. See, for example, *SH,* f. 63b, 107a, 174a, 358a–b. Hillel is accurate even in the way he refers to R. Ẓevi Hirsch's father, R. Abraham, the author of *Torat ḥayim*: the latter signed his endorsement of *ʿOlat yiẓhak* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1692) with the following formula: *avram hu avraham*. See Meir Edelboym, *Di yidn-shtot Mezrich* (Buenos-Aires: Mezricher-lanslayt-farayn in Argentina, 1957), 295.

45. For the discussion of R. Ẓevi Hirsch (Junior, Hillel's mentor) pedigree, see Edelboym, *Di yidn-shtot Argentina*, 294–297.

46. Hillel repeatedly cites his learning under Rabbi Ẓevi Hirsh: "And I stayed with him and in my thirst I drank the words of the great Rabbi until I understood little by little the smaller face [of God] (*mi-zʿeyr ʾanpin*) of his sacred writings and copied them." *SH*, f. 118a.

preparation for his career. Second, Hillel's claim that he had copied amulets and remedies from Ẓevi Hirsch implies that practical Kabbalah had already become part and parcel of general Jewish culture—even prominent rabbis were engaged in it, to say nothing of itinerant healers, well-established doctors, and *baʿalei shem*.[47]

Thus, with medical and kabbalistic experiences gained under Fortis and Ẓevi Hirsch, in the 1730s Hillel took to the road. From Mezerich he moved to Podolia and Volynia, and, at the end of the 1730s, to Lithuania.[48] It was in Galicia and Volhynia that he started his career of a *baʿal shem*. In 1731 he performed an exorcism in the town of Shinove (Pol.: Sieniawa, near Przemys'l).[49] Between 1731 and 1733 he was active as *baʿal shem* in Olik (Olyka), and in 1733 he came to Ostrah (Ostróg) and later to Tutchin.[50] During his trip to the north, Hillel came to Shklov.[51] In 1739 he reached Keidan.[52] Apparently, at that time he was married and had at least two daughters.[53] Between 1739 and 1741 he moved westward, heading probably to Posen (Poznań), where he started writing his manuscript, which, he believed, would change his life for the better.[54]

III. Hillel Baʿal Shem and the Jewish Community

The beginning of Hillel's career was promising. He visited important Jewish communities in Volynia and Podolia and was commissioned as *baʿal shem*. His success in Ostrah, the third place he visited in his itinerary, was pivotal. In the 1730s, Ostrah was an important private Polish town. It boasted a huge Polish palace and fortress, one of the busiest annual fairs in Poland, a beautiful, big sixteenth-century, fortress-shaped synagogue, more than 20 smaller synagogues and prayer houses, and illustrious rabbis, some of them descendants of the disciples of Maharal (Rabbi Yehudah Löwe ben Beẓalel of Prague, 1525–1609).[55] Hillel came to

47. Thus *SH* provides additional support to the argument that by the 1720s Kabbalah captured minds of East European Jews, see Etkes, *Baʿal ha-shem*, chap. 1; Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, chap. 6; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, chap. 1. On the spread of practical Kabbalah in East Europe see Ze'ev Gries's "He-ʿatakat ve-hadpasat sifrei kabbalah ke-makor le-limudah," *Maḥanayim* 6 (1994): 204–211.

48. *SH*, f. 35b, 125a–127a.

49. Galicia/Red Ruthenia, now in Eastern Poland.

50. All three localities were in the same Rovno district of Podolia and some of them were repeatedly mentioned in the stories about Baʿal Shem Tov collected in *Shivḥei ha-besht*. See, for example, stories nos. 26, 59 and 67 for Ostrah (Ostrog) and 204 for Olyka.

51. *SH*, f. 209b.

52. *SH*, f. 35b; Pol.: Kiejdany, near Kovno, Lithuania.

53. See Hillel's complaints of his bad luck in the family context, *SH*, f. 74b.

54. This assumption is based on Hillel's attempts to please German Jews (*yehudei Ashkenaz*) at the expense of Polish Jews (*yehudei Polin*). Hillel refers to the former as to his potential readers and, he hopes, his future employers: "As I have observed in different communities in Poland, Podol, and Volhyn, they [the Jews] pray in their houses of learning (*batei midrash*) in such a loose way, that only some of them will go to Paradise. It is because of that [loose prayer] that the Redemption is not coming. However, I praise the [Jews in the] countries of Ashkenaz, let them see the Redemption!" *SH*, f. 80a.

55. Yitzhak Alperowitz and Hayyim Finkel, eds., *Sefer ostrah, volin: maẓevet zikaron le-kehilah kedoshah* (Tel Aviv: ʾIrgun yoẓei ostrah be-yisraʾel, 1987), 37–38, 58–59.

the town of Ostrah and stayed at the home of the rabbi of the *kloyz,* who was the son of the chief rabbi of the town. Either Hillel could not prove his pedigree and learning and was not allowed into the *kloyz*, an elitist prayer house of East European kabbalists, or the *kloyz* did not fit Hillel's immediate interests.[56] At any rate, Hillel spent two or three days in a special room of the local *bet midrash*. Indeed, he learned that there was an incident in the community—a woman had an evil spirit (*dybbuk*) who refused to leave her body—and he waited until the elders of the city commissioned him to perform the exorcism. Apparently, there was some consternation among the elders, who were either reluctant to rely on the powers of an itinerant *baʿal shem* or mistrusted Hillel personally, or both. This is how Hillel describes the episode:

> One evening the evil spirit [*ruaḥ*] sent for the honorable man, the former beadle [*shamash*] of the Rabbi, a great hasid and the Kabbalist Naftali Kohen Ẓedek, of blessed memory.[57] The spirit instructed him that he should immediately find Reb Hillel Baʿal Shem, who had just come to their community. "He [Reb Hillel Baʿal Shem] will put an end to my days with the help of holy names in the synagogue. He might be able to find a kind of remedy for me." And that man [the beadle] did not want to listen to the spirit and started to talk in public. Later, the demon told the beadle from the body of the woman: "If you do not go to the Baʿal Shem, you will be sorry, for it will definitely be too late."[58]

From this episode one may learn, first, that Hillel was not a famous *baʿal shem*. Second, he did his best to prove he was well known—if not among local Jews, than at least among the otherworldly inhabitants. Hillel used the *dybbuk*, a representative of the evil powers, to establish his reputation. Third, local dwellers treated Hillel harshly despite his desire to help them.[59] They mistrusted Hillel and in all likelihood mocked him in public—hence the reluctance of the beadle to resort to Hillel's help.

The case Hillel encountered in Ostrah was not an easy one.[60] The confes-

56. In connection to the individual mystics active before the Ba'al Shem Tov, Hundert mentions that "[i]n some towns, there were groups of *Ḥasidim* who prayed separately in their own *kloyzen* ("prayer rooms"), or study halls, and were thought to benefit the community that supported them by their special ties to Heaven." See Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 120 and references he brings in n. 5. The importance of the *kloyz* (and not *bet midrash*) as the center of study of East European kabbalists before the Besht has been in the focus of Joseph Weiss's fundamental essay, "A Circle of Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism," in *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism* (London and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 27–42.

57. To some extent the details provided in the text corroborate the veracity of the whole story. The late Naftali Cohen Ẓedek, mentioned by Hillel Baʿal Shem, was most likely Rabbi Naftali ben Yiẓḥak Kaẓ, the head of the rabbinical court and the chief rabbi of the province. After Ostrah he held the position of a chief rabbi in Posen and Frankfurt am Main. He passed away in Turkey while traveling to the Land of Israel. See *Sefer ostrah,* 38.

58. *SH*, 126a.

59. Hillel thus describes the treatment he received in Ostrah: "They brought me [by force] from the ritual bath before the morning prayer," "they opened their mouths against me . . ." *SH*, f. 126a–b.

60. My analysis of the socio-psychological reality of exorcism is based on the methodology

sion obtained from the woman/*dybbuk* under the threat of excommunication revealed that a certain Jew took a non-Jewish concubine and had children with her. For unknown reasons he was later involved in a murder case. Jews tried to arrest and prosecute him but he converted to Greek Orthodoxy *(be-ʾemunat yavan)* and circumvented punishment. Finally, he died a terrible death. Since he was possibly not buried properly (a posthumous punishment for a criminal and an apostate), after several years he apparently became an evil spirit (*ruaḥ*). He settled in a tree in Ostrah, not far from the town's big synagogue, waiting for a victim.[61] Once on Shabbat, when a pregnant woman was sitting under the tree inhabited by the spirit, the latter entered her body through her right eye, thus becoming a *dybbuk*.[62] She lost sight in that eye. The same night the *dybbuk* tortured the woman's husband until he died. Soon the woman gave birth to a baby girl. Although the girl was healthy, the *dybbuk* spent some seven years within the woman's body, growing stronger and causing her bitter sufferings until she became completely blind. At this point the community decided to search for a remedy.

Further details of the story make us think that Hillel uses "evil spirit" (he avoids the word "*dybbuk*") as a substitute for the issues of promiscuity and heterodoxy. A certain woman from Ostrah had intimate relations with a convert outside her wedlock. Her lover killed her Jewish husband but did not harm the daughter. Blindness was either metaphorical (she was the only one who did not understand the results of her sickness) or real, inflicted by the harsh treatment of the Jewish woman by the convert. Perhaps the implications of heterodoxy made Hillel subsequently transfer the exorcism to outside the center of the town.[63] The prox-

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elaborated by Marion Gibson in "Witchcraft trials—how to read them" and "Deconstructing generic stories," in *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early European Witches* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 50–109. It is also supported by Christine Worobec's statement that certain types of possession "represent a socially understood illness as opposed to a medical disease," see Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 17. My approach finds support also in Yoram Bilu's statement: "The validation of the moral ascendancy of religious leaders through the *dybbuk* idiom contributed to social control . . . The exorcistic ritual constituted a conservative mechanism that facilitated the perpetuation of the traditional status hierarchy in the community." See Yoram Bilu, "The Taming of the Deviants and Beyond: An Analysis of Dybbuk Possession and Excorcism in Judaism," in *Spirit Posession in Judaism: Cases and Context from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 64.

61. The motif of an evil spirit or a spirit of a deceased person sitting on a tree and addressing the vagabonds appears already in *Sefer ḥasidim*. See Jehuda Wistinetzki and Jacob Freimann, ed., *Sefer ḥasidim* (Frankfurt a/M: Warhmann Verlag, 1924), 37 (siman 35); this book is based on Parma MS. Cf. Reuven Margaliot ed., *Sefer ḥasidim* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1957), 176–178 (siman 170); this is based on Bologna MS.

62. According to the evidence meticulously collected by Nigal, evil spirits and *dibbukim* prefer to enter homes either through doors not protected by *mezuzot* or through any part of the body of a sick person, in particular pregnant women. For a comprehensive list of the "preferred entrances" of the *dibbukim*, see Gedalya Nigal, *Sipurei 'dibbuk' be-sifrut yisrael* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mas, 1983), 26–28.

63. On a very similar case involving a Jewish woman and her husband, Jan Serafinowicz, who converted to Catholicism after being attended to by a *baʿal shem*, see Meir Balaban, *Le-toldot hatenuʿah ha-frankit* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1934), 57–58. On Serafinowicz, see Shimon Dubnow, *History of*

imity of the "enemies of Israel" and of the "impure place"—oblique references to the nearby church—prevented Hillel from fully applying his powers.[64] In addition, the local priests perhaps were aware of the incident and tried to resolve it by converting the woman.[65] Very likely the exorcism led to confessions offensive to Christianity, and Hillel decided to transfer the operation elsewhere to avoid publicity. On the other hand, exorcism led to confessions on the part of the woman that were offensive to the Jewish community at large. Nobody liked the fact that Hillel made the Ostrah Jews wash their dirty laundry in public.[66]

Hillel portrays the exorcism in great detail. If *SH* presents it accurately, at least in regard to Hillel's *modus operandi*, one feature of Hillel's practices becomes particularly salient. It was the *dybbuk* that instructed Hillel about the methods of exorcism, its time and place, the preparation it required, and its possible outcome.[67] The *dybbuk* allegedly told Hillel to bring seven Torah scrolls and seven pristine boys ("who have not sinned"). He advised Hillel to take the boys, before the procedure, to the ritual bath and to the morning prayer. He purportedly indicated that Hillel should go to the town of Tutchin, not far from Ostrah (*samukh le-k"k ostrah*), and finish the ceremony there. Finally, the *dybbuk* encouraged Hillel: "And you, Rabbi, should not be scared and do not run away from me."[68] In terms of endorsement of his activities, Hillel briefly mentions the amulets of R. Ẓevi Hirsch ben Avraham, which he used for the exorcism, yet, when it came to the procedure itself, his only spiritual instructor—his personal *maggid*—was the *dybbuk*.[69]

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the Jews in Russia and Poland (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1916–1920), 1:173; Israel Halpern, ed., *Pinkas vaʿad ʾarbʿa ʾaraẓot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1948) p. 265 par. 549; Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 75 and 141; Rosman, *Lords' Jews*, 206–207.

64. Hillel resorted to the *dybbuk's* assistance to explain the reason for his own weakness: "You are the Rabbi who has been acting for already six days. You have pronounced oaths against me and have tried to exorcise me using holy names. However, although you did not manage to do anything (*shum peʿulah*) against me, you have somewhat weakened the wicked forces which surround my soul, and you have harmed my members, sinews, and bones. However, this is not the right place that allows applying the holy names, because the stronghold of evil stands next to—distinguish!—the holy synagogue. If you like to accomplish your work, you should better try a different place" *SH,* f. 125a.

65. The woman/*dybbuk* warned Hillel about the possible impact of local priests: "These are the priests who give their bad advice that they derive from the powers of their tradition. Their advice comes from their mouths [in the form of] fire and flames, and their words are not true. They will surrender to you, if God wants it" *SH,* 125b. Like *baʿalei shem*, both Eastern and Western Christian Churches resorted to exorcism as to an effective ecclesiastical ritual aimed at obtaining confession. See Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 428–434; Worobec, *Possessed*, 23–25, 45–48.

66. Hillel discovered outrageous and by no means flattering facts about the community: "And he [the evil spirit] revealed publicly horrible and nasty things which had happened in that town among the Jews. And the Jews understood that the bird from heaven raised its voice, the time had come, and the end of all ends. All the secrets became known due to the powers of heavenly and earthly oaths. All the secrets impossible to convey here that happened in that town were finally disclosed" *SH*, f. 127a.

67. In addition, Hillel *a priori* relinquished any responsibility for the operation and burdens the *dybbuk* with it: "The only thing which I do not know is whether I will leave her body without her soul or with it," confesses the *dybbuk*. *SH*, f. 127a.

68. *SH*, f. 125b.

69. On the dichotomy *dybbuk-maggid*, see the groundbreaking article by Yoram Bilu, "Dybbuk

Due to the "instructions" of the *dybbuk*, who wanted the *baʿal shem* to banish him, Hillel was a success, and socio-psychological order was restored:

> I pronounced one great oath and one great petition in the presence of ten appropriate people and the Torah scrolls. Thursday, Elul, 5493 [1733], the spirit left the body of that woman through the little toe of her left leg from under her little nail so that some blood came out of her toe.[70] After that she began seeing a little bit and she started going to the synagogue, to the cemetery, and to all other places as she found fit. However, she could not see at all through the only eye by which the spirit had entered her body.[71]

The Ostrah case suggests a clear-cut pattern of relations between the *baʿal shem*, the communal (*kehillah*) authority, the ordinary Jews of the town, and the spirit. The *baʿal shem* performed exorcism in the atmosphere of public contempt. Although mistreated by the inhabitants of the town, Hillel was still respected by the *kahal*. He depended completely on the decision of the local authority. He started to operate only when he obtained the official consent of the *kahal* elders.[72] The difference in attitudes to Hillel Baʿal Shem manifests the interests of the communal leaders who employed the *baʿal shem* as an instrument to strengthen their power. While the *kahal* used Hillel to instill fear of promiscuity and restore social and psychological order in the community, Hillel used the *dybbuk* to instruct his audience and instill some awe toward, if not belief in, the *baʿal shem*'s magic. As we will see, this pragmatic usage of the *dybbuk* for self-promotion was not atypical for Hillel's *modus operandi*.

Paradoxically, the only creature in *SH* that acknowledged the wisdom and high status of Hillel Baʿal Shem was the evil spirit, Hillel's *alter ego*.[73] The Ostrah *dybbuk* not only "helped" Hillel to understand the situation in the community but

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and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism," *AJS Review* 21 no. 2 (1996): 341–366.

70. In this case Hillel Baʿal Shem closely follows the advise of Haim Vital who in his *Shaʿar ruaḥ ha-kadesh* in the name of Isaac Luria strongly recommended that practical kabbalists make the evil spirit leave human body through a toe so that it does not harm the body. Eventually, the little toe on the left foot became a "classical" place for the exit of an evil spirit. For a comprehensive list of the "preferred exits" of the *dibbukim*, see Nigal, *Sipurei 'dibbuk' be-sifrut yisrael*, 54–60.

71. *SH,* f. 127a.

72. "And that man [beadle] went to the *parnas ha-ḥodesh* and related to him the words of the spirit. And the *parnas ha-ḥodesh* sent the beadle for me and asked me on behalf of the whole community to do some good for that woman," *SH,* f. 126b. Generally, the Jewish community of Ostrah (Ostrog) is mentioned several times in *Shivḥei ha-besht*. For instance, in story no. 26, a certain doctor from this town is referred to as a staunch opponent of the Besht who mocks his magic powers. Similarly, in *SH* the holy community of Ostrah does not seem very hospitable to Hillel Baʿal Shem. They also mock him. They openly mistrust him while he is working out ways to banish the *dybbuk*. They start to hate him even more so when the community learns a lot of nasty and revealing things about itself during the exorcism. The general commotion caused by Hillel Baʿal Shem in the community is also quite obvious. Cf. Bilu, "Taming of the Deviants," 55–59.

73. *SH*, f. 125a.

also taught the Jews how to behave and serve God.[74] Hillel's assumption is clear: if the community did not trust Hillel Baʿal Shem, let them listen to a *dybbuk*. In the Ostrah episode only the *dybbuk*, the spirit of a dead Jewish convert, addressed Hillel as "ha-rav." It is inappropriate here to discuss the reliability of the evidence of early-eighteenth-century demons, yet *SH* clearly indicates that there was nobody else who respected Hillel: after the *dybbuk* "revelations" and successful exorcism, Hillel seems to have been left alone. Had there been some benign arrangement between him and the local *kahal*, Hillel, who looked for a stable position in a community, would have mentioned it. His reticence implies that, again, he was doomed to loneliness, solitude, and wandering. Indeed, to make evil powers his only advocate was Hillel's clever ploy in the face of his situation. But the magician who was at home with *dybbuks* and evil powers was balancing on the brink of the permitted. Hillel did not realize he was causing his own failure—which was around the corner.

IV. Baʿal Shem among his colleagues

Three factors caused Hillel's downfall: first, competition in the market of East European itinerant Kabbalists; second, the rise of publications of practical Kabbalah books; and third, the crisis of the profession of *baʿalei shem*. His personal failures, which caused his distress and depression, were simply the results of these overarching reasons.[75]

Hillel suffered mostly because of his colleagues, pseudo-*baʿalei shem,* alleged impostors, troublemakers, and unscrupulous competitors, who exacerbated the constraints in the market of practical Kabbalah. Hillel depicted them as "robbers" and "false hasidim" (*ḥasidim shakranim*) who sacrilegiously introduced themselves as experienced kabbalists to the communal leadership.[76] Hillel complained that they never used Kabbalah for its own sake (*li-shemah*); whatever they did, they did only for money. They obtained falsified endorsements from insignificant rabbis and produced bogus miracles that had nothing to do with the honest *opera sacra* of a genuine *baʿal shem*.[77] They caused skepticism among Jews towards amulets and holy names and subsequently towards all those healers who earned their living honestly.[78] As a result, when a real *baʿal shem* arrived in a community and provided valid endorsements from renowned rabbis, nobody would trust him.[79] Therefore, from Hillel's vantage point, it was absolutely pivotal to

74. "The only thing I would tell you—through my stories and the deeds of my wicked hands—is that people should learn from me and through me how to serve the blessed Name," *SH*, f. 125b.

75. Hillel complains: "I should not say more in the time of my distress and distress of my daughters, yet I failed and got up and not let my foes rejoice over me [Ps. 30]. I failed several times in several nasty places involved with evil forces . . . ." See *SH*, f. 74b.

76. *SH*, f. 319b.

77. For Hillel's repeated complaints of pseudo-*baʿalei-shem*, see *SH*, f. 95a, 172b, 276b–277a, 321b.

78. *SH*, f. 299b–300a.

79. Kahana provides a number of cases proving that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the itinerant *baʿalei shem* or practical kabbalists were often identified with and treated as crypto-sabbateans. See David Kahana, *Toldot ha-mekubalim, ha-shabtaʾim ve-ha-ḥasidim* (Odessa: Moriyah, 1914), 18–19. Kahana seems to follow Yaʿakov Emden's sharp criticism of *baʿalei shem,* most of whom

distinguish between a real *baʿal shem* and a charlatan. Hillel suggested that the community should investigate, if not interrogate, any *baʿal shem* to verify his knowledge of Kabbalah books, his understanding of holy names, his *haskamot* (whether they were written by ordinary or well-known rabbis), and finally, his personal behavior (how he prays, fasts, performs ritual ablutions, etc.).[80]

Hillel was deeply concerned that charlatans had undermined the trust of common folk in the magic of the *baʿal shem*. Skepticism and disbelief of the ordinary Jews towards the kabbalists, according to Hillel's oblique references, had sabbatean implications. Hillel illustrated the spiritual damage caused by itinerant sabbateans through a peculiar incident that happened in the county of Pokuta in Bukovina Province in the town of Tismenits (Tysmienica), some 70 miles west of Chernovitz:

> A wicked man who was a scribe and renowned Kabbalist came into town. He stayed there for several weeks until he entered the house of the great hasid and Kabbalist Yosef Hols, of blessed memory, who passed away leaving behind a kosher and sacred Torah scroll. The above man went to [Rabbi Hols's] widow to [inspect] the scroll and found it perfect. Later he forged a cut (*ḥakikah*) [in the scroll] and demonstrated it in public. Then he demonstrated the mistake of the [late] Rabbi to the most illustrious people in the town. The next night Rabbi [Hols] appeared [to someone] in a dream and revealed everything that this scribe had committed, including the time, the book, the chapter, and the column in which the scribe had made his forgery, prohibiting him to disclose this information to the scribe. Soon afterwards the scribe stepped on a slippery path. He was banished and went to another country, to Little Poland.[81]

In this peculiar episode, a scribe and kabbalist whose reputation was in good standing abused the credibility of the community. He inserted certain misspellings into a Torah scroll with the aim of denigrating the former spiritual authority. The forgery was not a simple misspelling (*ḥisaron* or *yeter*); otherwise it would have been easy to correct. The scribe demonstrated the mistake in public because it was impossible to correct it according to Judaic scribal laws (*hilkhot STAM*).[82] For reasons of self-censorship, Hillel preferred to make oblique allusions without actually spelling out the "mistake." But in the context of early-eighteenth-century East

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Emden, by no means unbiased, identified as sabbateans. See, for example, the treatment of Eliyahu Ulianov, Shmuel Essingen, and Moshe Prager in Yaʿakov Emden *Sefer hitʾabkut* 28; idem. *Torat hakinʾaot* 118–119. However, Scholem convincingly proves the sabbatean origin of these practical healers, see Gershom Scholem, *Meḥkarim u-mekorot le-toldot ha-shabtaʾut*, ed. Yehuda Liebes (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar, 1994), 110–111. However, assessing the spread of pietistic doctrines and mystical ideas in eighteenth-century Poland, Hundert notes that some of the pietists "were undoubtedly also adherents of Shabbateanism, but others were not." He also argues that the border separating old-style (pre-Beshtian) pietists and crypto-sabbateans was blurred. See Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 121–122, 152.

80. *SH*, f. 173a.

81. *SH*, f. 94b.

82. See *Kuntres Mishnat sofrim* on *Mishnah Berurah*, 36 and *Mishnah Berurah* on *Shulḥan ʿArukh ʾOrakh Ḥayim* 32:20. On the scribal laws related to mistakes in the Torah scroll, see Yiẓḥak Shteiner and Yiẓḥak Goldshtein, *Dinei sefer torah she-nimẓah bo taut* (Jerusalem: OT, 1984).

European crypto-Sabbateanism an uncorrectable "mistake" implied perhaps one and the same notorious trick: The followers of Sabbatai Tsevi, scribes in the first place, were known to insert the name of the pseudo-Messiah instead of the tetragrammaton into *sifrei STAM*—phylacteries, mezuzas, and Torah scrolls.

One may want to compare Hillel's description with the following testimony of Rabbi Moshe Hagiz, Hillel's contemporary, known as a persecutor of crypto-sabbateans *par excellence*. The text is taken from his *Gebiat ʿedut,* translated by Elisheva Carlebach:

> In Poland one witness testified to a different sort of profanation of the sacred: R. Nathan, head of the study hall, had a Torah scroll from which the name of God was omitted. Instead, he inscribed the name of Sabbatai Zebi. There were approximately fifty souls who knew of this, R. Hayyim of Zholkiew among them, and they did the same with phylacteries. When they investigated them, he tearfully confessed; when it was all found to be true, they burned the scroll and the phylacteries. The communal scribe had contaminated many people with these phylacteries, and the communal leaders exposed him and whipped him . . . [83]

Apparently Moshe Hagiz and Hillel Baʿal Shem depict identical behavioral patterns, which Hagiz traced to crypto-sabbateans and Hillel to false *baʿalei shem*. It would be tempting to reinterpret Hillel's references to the predominance of charlatans among Jewish East European healers in the context of the crypto-sabbatean schism.[84] This might be particularly important in view of the parallel Hillel traced between pseudo-magicians and the *dybbuks*. As if sharing common knowledge, sometimes the contemporary Jewish community did perceive crypto-sabbateans as possessed by *dybbuks*.[85] In this context, the rapid explosion of the population of itinerant *baʿalei shem* was perhaps a response not only to the growing number of those possessed by *dybbuks* and needing exorcism, but also to the expansion of crypto-Sabbateanism into Poland and the necessity to identify, neutralize, or excommunicate the harbingers of heresy.[86]

83. Carlebach, *Pursuit of Heresy*, 184–5; Zvi Mark, "*Dybbuk* and *Devekut* in the *Shivhe ha-Besht*: Toward a Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism," in *Spirit Posession in Judaism: Cases and Context from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 274–280.

84. Cf. Scholem's portrayal of Sabbatai Rafael from Mistra (Misithra) the first to combine practical Kabbalah with sabbatean propaganda. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 783–789.

85. Bilu, "Dybbuk and Maggid," 352, Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 606; cf. literary reflection of this parallel in Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Satan in Goray*, Trans. Jacob Sloan (New York: Avon Books, 1955), chap. 13. For the analysis of sabbatean underpinnings in Singer's novel, see Beẓalel Naor, *Post Sabbatian Sabbatianism: Study of an Underground Messianic Movement* (Spring Valley, NY: Orot, 1999), 98–103; for more literary variations on this topic, see Robert Alter, *After the Tradition* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), 61–75.

86. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Protestants and Catholics also identified heretics as demons or possessed; see Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, 387–88, 534–37, and esp. 385–88. One may see oblique evidence of this parallel in the reverse taking place in Western Europe in the eighteenth century, when, due to growing religious tolerance, the number of witch-hunting cases radically diminished. See Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Brian Levack, and Roy Porter, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe:*

Hillel was not unaware of the righteous healers among his colleagues. He describes them with one of his favorite words, *ẓanuaʿ* (modest), which in *SH* indicates the highest level of spiritual purity and personal righteousness.[87] Only *ẓanuaʿ*, a modest person, is able to produce a truly effective amulet (*kameyaʿ mumḥeh*).[88] Among the real wonder-workers Hillel mentions a number of righteous magicians[89] such as Eli[yahu] Baʿal Shem,[90] Joel Baʿal Shem,[91] Naftali Kaẓ,[92] Rabbi Yekovsky [possibly Jenowski] Baʿal Shem,[93] Pereẓ Baʿal Shem,[94]

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (London: Athlone Press, 1997), 42. On the other hand, in eighteenth-century Russia, due to the Nikon schism and persecutions of the Old Believers (perceived as witches), witch-hunting cases were on the rise, especially between 1690 and 1739. See, for example, the fundamental research by Aleksandr Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 347–354.

87. In Judaic tradition the usage of the notion *ẓanuaʿ* is inseparable from the secret knowledge. The twelve-letter Name of God, for example, was transmitted by the sages to *ẓenuʿim she-bi-kehunah*, that is, the "discrete (modest) among the priests." Also, the secret forty-two-letter Name of God, according to R. Yehuda ha-Nasi, was transmitted only to a "discrete (modest) one:" *ein mosrim oto ela le-mi she ẓanuaʿ*. See B. *Kiddushin* 71a.

88. *SH*, f. 153a. *Raziʾel ha-malʾakh* makes the same claim and uses the same word, *ẓanuaʿ*. See *Sefer Raziʾel ha-malʾakh*, 8a and 33a (Medzhybozh, 1819).

89. First four *baʿalei shem–SH*, f. 277a; second two–*SH*, f. 155a.

90. Eliyahu bar Aaron Yehuda Meḥalem (b .1550), the head of the rabbinic court in Chelm, studied in Lublin at the *yeshivah* of R. Shlomoh Luria. See Etkes, *Baʿal ha-shem*, 18 and 33. In *SH* Hillel reproduces in greater detail one of the famous stories about Eliyahu Baʿal Shem that appeared also in *Toldot ʾadam*, siman 86. Cf. *SH,* f. 44b.

91. Joel ben Uri Heilperin (Hilpern) from Zamość, the famous *baʿal shem* and grandson of Joel bar Iẓḥak Ayzik Heilperin, Baʿal Shem from Zamość (ca. 1690–ca. 1755), was one of the most well-known practical kabbalists of his time. He endorsed and penned a number of famous books on practical Kabbalah, among them *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* (1722), *Mifʿalotʾelokim* (1710), and *Toldotʾadam* (1720). See a detailed discussion of him in Moshe Hillel, *Baʿalei shem* (Jerusalem: Makhon Bney Issakhar, 1993), 54–64, 90–179; Etkes, *Baʿal ha-shem*, 41–50; Matras, "Sifrei segulot," 141–143; and Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 150–152. On the importance of practical Kabbalah books in the development of early Hasidism, see Haviva Pedaya, "Ha-degem ha-ḥevrati-dati-kalkali be-ḥasidut," in *Ẓadik ve-ʿedah*, ed. David Assaf (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2001), 434–397, esp. 364–366.

92. Rabbi Naftali ben Yiẓḥak ha-Kohen (Kaẓ) from Posen (Pozna, 1649–1719), one of the leading authorities in practical Kabbalah, was known for his wonderful amulets and successful exorcisms. He endorsed many books on practical Kabbalah, including *Mifʿalotʾelokim* (sometimes even ascribed to him—see, for example, Lemberg edition, 1872). He personally knew the famous *baʿal shem* Binyamin Beinish of Krotoszyn and endorsed his *Amtaḥat binyamin* (Wilhelmsdorf, 1716). See the discussion in Matras, "Sifrei segulot," n. 11 on pp. 2–3 of the supplement between pages 141–142. On Katz see Gedalyah Nigal, "ʿAl rav naftali kaẓ mi-pozna," *Sinai* 92 (1983): 91–94; Ariel Bar-Levav, "Ha-mavet be-ʿolamo shel ha-mekubal naftali ha-kohen kaẓ" (Ph.D., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1990); Yehuda Liebes, "A Profile of R. Naphtali Katz From Frankfurt and His Attitude Towards Sabbateanism," in Grözinger and Dan, *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, 208–222 and Rachel Elior, "R. Nathan Adler and the Frankfurt Pietists: Pietist Groups in East and Central Europe during the Eighteenth Century," in *Jüdische Kultur in Frankfurt am Main von den Anfängen biz zur Gegenwart*, ed. Karl-Erich Grözinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 135–177.

93. Most likely Yaʿakov ben Moshe Kaẓ from Yanov (Pol.: Janów, therefore, Yanovski), the author of *Minḥat yaʿakov solet* (Wilhelmsdorf, 1731), the book on practical Kabbalah, amulets and remedies. See Etkes, *Baʿal ha-shem*, 43, 46 n. 83. Yaʿakov b. Moshe's book was endorsed by Joel Baʿal Shem from Zamość, see Moshe Hillel, *Baʿalei shem*, 164.

94. I was not able to identify him.

and Heshel Baʿal Shem.[95] The conduct of these *baʿalei shem* seems to correspond to Hillel's high standards of personal purity and asceticism established in *SH*. Hillel did not hesitate to copy from their books and reproduce their amulets. To use his own parlance, these wonder-workers and experts in practical Kabbalah were true hasidim—in contrast with the false hasidim, charlatans, and fake *baʿalei shem*. However, even these righteous *baʿalei shem* troubled Hillel. Their immaculate conduct notwithstanding, Hillel felt deeply hurt by the fact that they began to publicize secret mystical knowledge and put their books on practical Kabbalah to press. There is nothing else in *SH* that troubles him as much as the publication of books of *baʿalei shem*.[96]

A number of prominent eighteenth-century rabbis, among them Yonatan Eybeschuetz and Yaʿakov Emden, did not welcome the dissemination of books on practical Kabbalah and opposed the whole idea of their publication.[97] It does not seem strange that Hillel Baʿal Shem was also unhappy, even deeply depressed, because of their publication. Hillel's own reasons, however, were different from those of Yaʿakov Emden. First, being published, esoteric secrets lost their secrecy; anyone was able to copy an amulet from a newly published kabbalistic book and use it at his own discretion. Second, published books nullified the importance of Hillel's knowledge of the secret techniques he used to write and apply the amulets. Third, Hillel cites an authoritative warning against publishing books on Kabbalah: Mystical books should not be published, and if published, should not be used for the sacred work of a *baʿal shem*.[98] Hence, Hillel's indignation:

> In our generation, many books with holy names and amulets, all of them secret, were published. Do not use them—not in this world nor in the world to come, for they help the wicked. Someone purchases a book for himself

95. It is tempting to identify Heshel Baʿal Shem from *SH* with Heschel Ẓoref, a crypto-sabbatean, whom Gershom Scholem identified with Rabbi Adam, the mystical teacher of the Besht. See *In Praise of the Baʿal Shem Tov: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism*, trans. and ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome Mintz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 15–18, 31–32; the discussion of Rabbi Adam as Heschel Ẓoref in Gershom Scholem, "Ha-navi ha-shabtayi r. heshel ẓoref—r. ʾadam baʿal shem," in his *Meḥkerei shabtaut*, ed. Yehuda Liebes (Jerusalem: Am ʿoved, 1991), 579–599; for criticism of Scholem's identification see Moshe Hillel, *Baʿalei shem*, 305–316. Rosman rejects Scholem's identification and strongly supports the viewpoint of Chone Shmeruk, who identified Rabbi Adam as the legendary late-sixteenth-century figure from Prague, rejecting thus any connection between him and Heshel Ẓoref. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 144–145. For better understanding of Hillel Baʾal Shem it is important that despite his sabbatean reputation, Heschel Ẓoref was tolerated by such kabbalists as Ẓevi Hirsch Kaidanover, see Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 125.

96. For a list of books on practical Kabbalah printed in Żółkiew, see Yeshayahu Vinograd, *ʾOẓar ha-sefer ha-ʿivri.* 2 vols. (Jerusalem: ha-makhon le-bibliografia memuḥshevet, 1993), 2:306–308.

97. Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 34, 36.

98. Hillel constantly reiterates his criticism: "I have found in several books of great Kabbalists of previous generations who warned against the usage of mystical books," *SH*, f. 172a–b. And again, "In a couple of small books published in Zholkva they issued several amulets (*segulot*) and lots of names (*shemot*) yet everything was printed without any sense (*bli taʿam*); one should not rely on them," *SH*, f. 188a.

> [such as] *Toldot*,[99] *Zevaḥ pesaḥ*,[100] and *Poʿel gevurot*[101] printed in Zholkva [Żółkiew]. These books never reveal secrets but only confuse people. One should reveal secrets only to the modest (*ẓanuaʿ*).[102]

According to Hillel, the unscrupulousness of certain *baʿalei shem* is the most important reason against the publication of books on practical Kabbalah. Printed books found their way easily into the hands of impostors who did not behave themselves in accord with the pietistic requirements, thus obtaining an easy opportunity to cheat.[103] That is why, claims Hillel, the publication of practical Kabbalah books has corrupted his generation.[104] In addition, Hillel stresses the intellectual problem: The recipients of the newly published Kabbalah books do not understand the intrinsic mechanisms of the amulets and do not know how to produce new amulets on the basis of the published ones. Indeed, implies Hillel Baʿal Shem, the printed Kabbalah kills while the oral revives. Further, in order to understand how to use a handwritten or published amulet, what its connection with the Torah is, and in what cases it might be effective, one needs Hillel's oral explanation or clarification. Ultimately, Hillel is trying *ex post facto* to win a lost battle: He fights against publication of practical Kabbalah books and democratization of the kabbalistic knowledge since real knowledge for him is oral, elitist, and manuscript-based.[105]

99. *Toldot ʾadam* (Żółkiew, 1720).

100. Żółkiew, 1722.

101. There was no such book published in Żółkiew or elsewhere. Most likely, Hillel refers to *Mifʿalot ʾelokim* (Żółkiew, 1710 and 1724), but confuses the title.

102. *SH*, f. 172a.

103. Żółkiew books on practical Kabbalah were printed in pocket-size format. *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* indicates this characteristic on its title page. The publication of small-size books allowed Żółkiew, first, to produce a cheap product and reach out to a wider Jewish audience, and, second, to put to press more books than the maximum 700 annual *kuntrasim* (in this case, book copies), permitted to Żółkiew printing press by the Council of Four Lands as a result of the fierce competition between Lublin, Żółkiew, and Cracow printing presses at the very end of the seventeenth century. For the decisions of the Council, see Shlomo Buber, *Kiryah nisgavah: hi ha-ʿir Zolkiv* (Cracow: Bi-defuso shel Y. Fisher, 1903), 104–105. For a brief history of the Żółkiew printing press, see Meir Balaban, "Batei defus yehudiim bezolkiv," in Gelber and Ben-Shem, *Sefer zolkiv*, 215–224; Haim Dov Friedberg, *Toldot ha-defus bepolanyah* (Tel Aviv: Barukh Fridberg, 1950), 62–68; Israel Halpern, *Yehudim ve-yahadut be-mizraḥ eropa: meḥkarim be-toldotehem* (Jerusalem: Magness, 1968), 83–84.

104. "In our generation everyone buys a book *Toldot ʾadam* for himself. The book, which is a waste of ink and paper, everyone buys very cheap and becomes *baʿal shemot*. Yet, those who buy it, do not know anything about this world and about the world to come. They even do not behave according to the good behavior described in that small book *Toldot ʾadam*." *SH,* f. 155a–b.

105. Mention should be made of the similarity between Hillel's, Jonathan Eybeschuetz's, and Jacob Emden's criticism of the publicizing of the Kabbalah books, see Idel, *Hasidism*, 35–36. On the dichotomy "books vs. manuscripts" in the context of a demonopolization of the elitist knowledge and democratization process in East European Jewish culture, see Elchanan Reiner, "The Ashkenazi élite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book," *Polin* 10 (1997): 85–94; Moshe Rosman, "Le-toldotav shel makor histori," *Ẓion* 58 (1993): 175–214. For the more general discussion of "manuscript vs. printed book dichotomy," see Zeʾev Gries, *Ha-Sefer ke-sokhen tarbut: ba-shanim 460–660 (1700–1900)* (Tel Aviv: ha-kibbuts ha-meuḥad, 2002), 12–13 and bibliography he assembles in notes 5 and 6.

Not only do books deny his manuscript; they reject the indispensability of Hillel's personal involvement implied in *SH*.[106]

The impact of the false and genuine *baʿalei shem* on Hillel's career was that rank-and-file Jews became skeptical about the magical powers of all healers. Common disbelief in the *baʿal shem* contradicted the very core of the healing process, which, according to Hillel, required strong belief in the magical powers of the *baʿal shem*. Even a professionally made amulet would not operate if one did not believe in it, argues Hillel.[107] Hillel provides dreadful stories that illuminate the fatality of such disbelief. In one case, which took place in Keidan, Lithuania, in 1739, a woman refused to follow the advice of her relatives to get rid of the amulet. She kept it and managed to save herself from the evil Lilith.[108] Her husband took his amulet off, but Hillel does not share with his reader what happened next. In another case, which took place in Wilkowyśk, Grodno Province, the *dybbuk* had been banished from a body of a woman, yet, because she had taken her protecting amulet from her neck and allowed skeptical relatives to open it, the spirit returned and destroyed all the efforts of the *baʿal shem*.[109] It is very likely that one or both of these episodes depict the failures of Hillel. The chronological juxtaposition of Hillel's failures with the beginning of his work on the *SH* manuscript (around 1739) makes one surmise that Hillel decided to restore his reputation demonstrating that he is a knowledgeable, well-connected, reputed, and pious *baʿal shem.* His socioeconomic position was precarious. Hillel considered writing a book as his last chance.

Hillel makes it clear that on several occasions his performance as *baʿal shem* was a complete failure.[110] As the result of his failure he was either banished from a number of localities or put under temporary *ḥerem.* It is evident, however, that he could not continue practicing as *baʿal shem*.[111] He had lost his reputation. Hillel's attempt to assimilate with scribes, preachers, slaughterers—"secondary intelligentsia"—and to establish himself as a healer and kabbalist, that is to say, an

106. "People bought [printed books on practical Kabbalah—*YPS*] so that they came into the hands of riff raff who don't know or understand any book or wisdom; only whatever is in these little books. They don't know how things occur, and they don't even perform a proper practice as it is prescribed. Obviously, they don't know the origins or functions of the names, for they do not have the slightest knowledge even of the exoteric part of the holy Torah." *SH*, f. 119b.

107. *SH*, f. 277a.

108. Perhaps the origin of this amulet is to be found among the popular medieval tales of Ben Sira that connect the destructive functions of Lilith to the circumstances of the creation of the first woman and that require from a healer responsible for writing the amulet special spiritual and physical qualities. See Eli Yassif, *Sipurei ben sira be-yemei ha-beynayim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 231–234.

109. *SH*, f. 34b, 54b–55a. This episode happened after the 1725 incident when an amulet on a woman was discovered containing sabbatean symbols purportedly written by R. Eybeschuetz. The similarity of these episodes suggests that the Jewish community mistrusted the production of *baʿalei shem* on the grounds of their alleged involvement in heresy. See Perlmuter, *Ha-rav yehonatan eybeschuez*, 37–42; Scholem, *Meḥkerey shabtaʾut*, 228–230, 707–733.

110. *SH*, f. 74b.

111. "The only thing I am seeking is a nice place to which I could come and regain my profession." See *SH*, f. 74b.

"official" *baʿal shem* in a particular Jewish locality ended up in fiasco.[112] Perhaps Hillel expected that his manuscript, *SH*, would prove that he was a great healer, that he was aware of new developments in practical Kabbalah and deserved better treatment. Hence, he conceived *SH* as an encyclopedia of practical Kabbalah in general and as his expanded résumé in particular.[113] Due to this twofold purpose, *SH* combined the *vademecum* of a practical kabbalist and a personal confession.

V. Hillel's vademecum

Following the tradition of *Sefer ha-zohar* and *Raziʾel ha-malʾakh*, Hillel claims that *SH* is a holy book.[114] He identifies two reasons for this. First, *SH* comprises a wealth of holy names, quotations from sacred kabbalistic sources, and amulets—in fact, *SH* itself may be regarded as a talisman, the holiness and effectiveness of which is undeniable. Second, Hillel argues that essentially *SH* is much older than any printed book on practical Kabbalah. He claims that all the printed books had been merely copied from *SH*, which remained unknown until Hillel Baʿal Shem obtained the privilege to disclose it. However, Hillel did not have a *maggid*—a mystical teacher; a double, like Yosef Karo's *maggid mesharim*[115]—to secretly convey to him the contents of the book. Instead of cleaving to esoteric celestial wisdom through the *maggid*, Hillel reaches out to it through pseudoepigrapic mediators—secret kabbalistic books and teachings.[116]

Two legends cover the origins of *SH*. According to the first, Ashmodai, king of demons, revealed secret knowledge to King Solomon, who recorded it, titled it *SH*, and hid it in the Western Wall of the Temple.[117] It was uncovered in the times

112. It was Yosef Weiss who put forward and elaborated the concept of "secondary intelligentsia" (he called it *ha-nodedet*, vagabond; *me-madregah shniyah*, second-rank, and *ha-bilti-rashmit*, non-official) that comprised wandering ethical teachers, preachers, healers, etc. and that socially cemented the rising hasidic movement. See his "Reshit ẓemiḥatah shel ha-derekh ha-ḥasidit," *Ẓion* 16 (1951): 49–56. For the critique of Weiss, see Haim Lieberman, *Ohel raḥe"l* (New York: H. Lieberman, 1980), 3–5.

113. Hillel perceives his writing of *SH* as a pious act and his perception resembles the attitude to writing among *hasidei ashkenaz*. See Colette Sirat et al., *La conception du livre chez les piétistes ashkenazes au moyen age* (Genève: Droz, 1996), 144.

114. "Sefer ha-kadosh ha-zeh," *SH*, f. 194a, 314a, and throughout. Cf. "ba-sefer ha-kadosh ha-zeh," "mi-hokhmat ha-sefer ha-kadosh ha-zeh," reiterated ten times at the beginning of *Sefer raziʾel* (Amsterdam, 1701), f. 3a–4b. On tradition of a sacred book in the European Jewish pietistic tradition, see Sirat, *La conception du livre*, 37–63.

115. See R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

116. In addition to pseudoepigraphic sources, *SH* contains references to such well-known kabbalistic sources as *Sefer yeszirah* (34b, 318a); *Sodot* of Nachmanides (15b, 32a–b); *Sefer ha-zohar* (171a, 187a–*Pekudei*; 302a, 302b, 303b, 305b, 306b–*Bereshit*); *Tikkunei zohar* (84a); Lurianic Kabbalah (14a, 16b, 23b, 30a, 70ff); Natan Neta Hannover's Lurianic siddur *Shaʿarei ẓion* (73b, 186a–187b); *Sefer ha-pardes* (20a); *ʿEmek ha-melekh* (20a); *Maʿaseh ʾelokim* (35b); *Sefer raziʾel* [*ha-malʾakh*] (62b, 117a); *Toldot ʾadam* (74b, 105b, 155a–b); *Korban shabat* (327a); *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* (both 172a).

117. *SH*, f. 117b–119b. Apparently the literary roots of this legend date back to the encounter between King Solomon and Ashmodai, King of Demons, whom Solomon captured, incarcerated, and made reveal the secrets of *shamir*, a wondrous worm instrumental in cutting the stones indispensable for the building of the Temple, depicted in B. *Gittin*. However, the idea of a secret book is absent from

of the Sanhedrin and transferred through generations until it came into the hands of Hillel. According to the second legend, Hillel himself discovered "the old book *SH*" and drew heavily from it.[118] Yet, Hillel's legend is not consistent: In a number of places, for example, Hillel notes *SH* and the writings of his mentor Tsevi Hirsch as two different texts, whereas elsewhere he claims that *SH* was either written by Ẓevi Hirsch or belonged to him.[119] By the same token Hillel also attributes *SH* to his friend Rabbi Efraim from Vissa.[120] Evidently Hillel does not have a clear-cut version of his own versus the esoteric tradition. Intellectually he is too shy. In a similar situation, the Besht also maintains that he was in possession of unique manuscripts—in his case, of an enigmatic Rabbi Adam Baʿal Shem. However, the Besht takes the decisive step towards spiritual appropriation of his mystical manuscript. He claims that besides him and the Patriarchs perhaps nobody else ever knew the contents of the manuscript: "They were in the hands of Abraham the Patriarch, may he rest in piece, and in the hands of Joshua, the son of Nun, but I do not know who are the others."[121] Hillel Baʿal Shem would not dare make such a bold statement. Direct connection to the secret celestial library (Liebes) is something he cannot afford. The gravity of his magic grounded him.[122]

SH depicts a world split into two parts. Living beings inhabit its first part; spiritual powers inhabit the second. Each part is divided into two subsequent realms. This world, *ha-ʿolam ha-zeh,* has a border separating Jews from gentiles. The other world is split into the realm of holy names and angels, *shemot ha-kedushah,* and evil names and powers, *shemot ha-tumʾah*. Each of these four parts has a pronounced hierarchy of values and is integral *per se*. That is why *SH* starts with the extensive explanation of this parallelism:

> And here are 32 rules that match 32 paths of wisdom as front and back. As they operate, thank God, in the upper [spheres]—we will be able to operate in the lower ones. As there are ten evil sephirot matching ten holy sephirot, there are holy names and there are foul names, there are celestial angels and there are angels of the earth (malʾakhey de-ʾara*)*.[123]

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this source. See B. *Gittin* 68a–b. It appears only in *Sefer ha-zohar,* which lists four books that Solomon received from Ashmodai, namely: the book containing magical material, the book of the wisdom of Solomon, the book on physiognomy, and the book on the knowledge of precious stones. See *Sefer ha-zohar* 3:194b, 3:193b, 2:70a, 1:225b. For more detail, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 6:301–302 n. 93.

118. *SH*, f. 90a.

119. For example, he says "Thus I heard from the great rabbi and he showed to me in his book *Sefer ha-ḥeshek* and I copied several pages." *SH*, f. 173b.

120. For example, Hillel recollects seeing an amulet in the book "*Sefer ha-ḥeshek* [written] by the great rabbi, renowned hasid and kabbalist Efraim, *maggid mesharim* from Vissa."

121. *Shivḥei ha-besht*, no. 187. See Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baʿal Shem Tov*, 196–97.

122. It is interesting to compare Hillel's manipulations with the holy names and the interpretation of magic/mystical in Yosef Karo: "The difference between legitimate and illegitimate use of Holy Names is therefore not of pure (spiritual) versus selfish (magical) intentions . . . but between formulae of ascent and formulae of descent." See Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, 73.

123. *SH*, f. 1b.

The same reflection characterizes both realms: Ten heavenly emanations are repeated in ten impure emanations, whereas the angels of heavens are negatively paralleled by the angels of earth. All elements oppose each other and mirror each other. Holy sefirah *keter* (the Crown) is paralleled by an abominable sefirah *karet* (literally "cut off by God"); good angel *Katriel* (literally "the Crowned Lord") is overshadowed by a corrupt angel *Kartiel* (the Destroyed Lord).[124] However, the dividing borders between them are not impenetrable. A Jew can become an apostate; a demon can appear to the Jews disguised as a scribe or even as a *baʿal shem*; good angels become evil as a result of a mere change of the order of letters in their names. *SH* is full of antitheses and, to use the parlance of Roman Jacobson, negative parallelism.[125]

The permeability of the antithetical realms represents a constant threat to simple folk. As in the case of *Macbeth*'s witches, it is difficult, if at all possible, to distinguish between fair and foul in Hillel's shamanic beliefs. The threat of an eruption of evil powers into the matters of this world makes life dangerous and people suspicious. Hence, the importance of the *baʿal shem*. He functions as a mediator between the four realms. He controls them semiotically through their signs and names. He knows how to differentiate between them and how to transform the powers of one into the powers of another. Finally, the *baʿal shem* reestablishes the balance between them. Who, if not the *baʿal shem*, is able to identify evil powers in the guise of a kabbalist or a scribe? And who can exorcise these powers, if not the *baʿal shem*? In the language of social anthropology, *SH* introduces the *baʿal shem* as a shaman with a pronounced mediatory function to restore cosmic, theological, societal, and psychological order.[126] Thus, the ultimate goal of *SH*, informing its style and genre, is to clarify to a reader—whether communal authority or wealthy protector—the indispensability of the *baʿal shem*. To justify his mission, Hillel depicts the complexity and danger of the spiritual worlds.

According to Hillel, *sitraʾ ʾaḥraʾ* (the evil power) and its wicked heirs, the demons, are ubiquitous.[127] The number of amulets prescribed in *SH* testifies to the astonishing ability of *sitraʾ ʾaḥra* to adapt to any environment.[128] To keep it under

124. *SH*, f. 298a. In the traditional kabbalistic texts, Katriel (Akhtariel) is part of the celestial dichotomy Katriel/Metatron, and not of the Manichean dichotomy Katriel/Kartiel. See the discussion in Arthur Green, *Keter: the Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 62–65.

125. See Roman Jacobson, *Selected Works* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 5:311–312.

126. Rosman was the first to insightfully place *baʿalei shem* in the context of shamanism, which he explained in the terms of Mircea Eliade's social anthropology and which has become standard since his 1996 book on the historical Besht. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism,* 13–15, 17–19.

127. Demons follow the commandment to multiply much better than do human beings (83b). They are not afraid of and cannot be stopped by *sifrei STAM* (94b). Neither the great rabbinic authority such as the head of a rabbinical court and *rosh yeshivah,* nor the learning fervor of the *lomdim* can stop them (107a). They prefer newly built houses (293b). A special prayer is required to prevent their appearance (46b–47a). If the prayer does not help, special secret names have to be pronounced to banish the evil (341b). Sometimes damnation is required to put evil under control (344b).

128. Hillel prescribes protective amulets that should be placed on the front door (since a mezuza would not help, 188a, 297b), above the threshold (103b), and over each of the doors of the house (297a), and still additional amulets are required against fire (188b, 317a), thieves (156b, 173b), evil eye (41b), demons (291a), evildoers (194b–195a), and *dybbuks* (198b, 132b–135a).

control, Hillel extensively employs the names of abomination (*shemot ha-tumʾah*) that cover in *SH* a separate chapter; he even establishes an immediate dialogue with evil powers.[129] Hillel not only designs amulets against the powers of *kelipah* (here: evil), but also makes *kelipah* instrumental in achieving practical purposes. *SH* includes amulets that allow observing evil powers *in corpore* (316a). It offers amulets that disable people (195b), induce sleep (196a), interrupt rest (212b, 293b), bring evil powers into a house (196b), prevent successful copulation between a husband and a wife (197b), and revive the dead in a dream (310a). It also offers effective imprecations against enemies. *SH* offers one of these curses among its amendments to the Eighteen Benedictions prayer, including it, quite surprisingly, in the petition of health and recovery (*refaʾeni*):

> May the name of Ploni ben Ploni be cursed according to the words of the Holy One, blessed be he, due to the permission to fight the Christians.[130] God of Yisrael, may the sons of this man become orphans and his wife a widow and may all the diseases and punishments recorded in this Torah befall him. For he is the trustworthy and merciful King . . . .[131]

Therefore *SH* is not only a kabbalistic book but also a witchcraft primer. It is obsessed with *kelipot*, forces of evil, and it seems not to be interested in *neẓoẓot*, divine sparks. Hillel is ready to use his magic to protect an individual or individuals from evil, but he is not ready to uplift an individual or individuals resorting to his mystical worldview. To paraphrase Moshe Idel, *SH* oscillates between mysticism and magic, but gravitates towards magic.[132] Hence *SH* sharply contrasts with the bulk of Central European books of practical Kabbalah and resembles East European ones such as *Zevaḥ pesaḥ*, *Toldot ʾadam* or *Mifaʿalot ʾelokim*. Yet its unparalleled necromantic nuances, absent in *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* or *Mifaʿalot ʾelokim*, firmly place the book in the context of eighteenth-century Polish and Russian *koldovstvo* (witchcraft). The significant amount of Slavic words and entire passages of Slav-

129. Hillel applies the "names of abomination" extensively (9a, 33b, 58b–59a, 60b–62a, 111a, 354a, 380b–381b). He interacts with the *dybbuks* (125a–127b, 135b–138b, 235a, 238a, 239b). In his interactions with evil powers, Hillel was not particularly innovative: evil names appeared in the kabbalistic literature long before the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah. Written ca. 1488 and 1504 in Morocco, *Sefer ha-meshiv* contained descriptions of evil names (*shemot ha-tumah*), demonologic references, as well as description of methods to neutralize evil power. See Gershom Scholem, "Le-maʿase r yosef della reina," *Meassef ẓiyon* 5 (1933): 126–127; idem., "Le-maʿaseh rʾ yosef della reina," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History, Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Siegfried Stein, Raphael Loewe (University: University of Alabama Press; London: Institute of Jewish Studies, 1979), 101–109.

130. Tentative translation of two consecutive abbreviations: RF'EL [*rashut pituaḥ ʾemẓʿey laḥimah*] YHN"H [Yeshua ha-Notsri (ha-mekulal?)].

131. *SH*, f. 68a.

132. Idel discusses differences and similarity between mystical and magic elements in Hasidism and argues that mystical-magic model is prevalent in the entire corpus of the hasidic literature. See Idel, *Hasidism*, 82–112. For Hillel, however, magical and mystical are two poles of the dichotomy that cannot be synthesized: Mysticism is a privilege of a kabbalist, whereas magic is for the popular consumption.

ic incantations and imprecations in *SH,* to be discussed elsewhere, testify to the fundamental commonality between the practices and worldview of a Slavic *znakhar'* (herbal healer) and a Jewish *baʿal shem*.[133]

VI. Hillel's ID

Who was Hillel Baʿal Shem? Obviously, he was not a charlatan who cynically exploited and preyed on the most pagan prejudices of simple folk, like *baʿalei shem* depicted by Joshua Trachtenberg.[134] Suffice to mention that the *baʿal shem* and large segments of the community shared the same values and beliefs. Nor was Hillel a halakhic authority, a rabbinic scholar, or a rabbi, as those *baʿaley shem* portrayed by Immanuel Etkes.[135] Rather, Hillel's worldview and his tragic fate resemble those itinerant *baʿalei shem*, vagabond shamans, members of the communal "secondary intelligentsia" and practical kabbalists, thirsty for some social leadership and a permanent position in the community, as described by Gedalyah Nigal,[136] Michal Oron,[137] and Moshe Rosman.[138] Hillel could do nothing but dream of the status of Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschuetz or Joel Heilperin-junior. The former practiced the art of *baʿal shem* and occupied the lucrative position of a town rabbi in Prague, and the latter was a community-sponsored practical kabbalist in Zamość. Hillel could not claim, like the charismatic and very authoritative Naftali Kaẓ from Pozna, that he personally had met the Angel of Death; he did not have the necessary positive charisma to counterbalance this encounter. Rather, Hillel must be compared to Binyamin Beinish from Krotoszyn: both Hillel and Binyamin Beinish complained of the vicissitudes of an itinerant life; they both were self-taught kabbalists who knew Lurianic sources and the *Zohar,* but both failed to establish themselves in the community. Indeed, striking stylistic and

133. This commonality is manifested in the significance for both the Slavic *znakharʾ* and the Jewish *baʿal shem* alike of the phenomena of "popular religion," that is, magical manuscripts combining prayers and healing remedies (Rus.: *"Travnik"* and *"Trebnik"*), black magic, and the unity of prayer and incantation. See Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii*, 75 ff., 92–93, 127. I use here the Slavic notion *znakhar* only to give an additional East European flavor to Moshe Rosman's shrewd definition of the *baʾal shem* as *shaman*. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 13–19.

134. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 79, 144, 196, 200.

135. Immanuel Etkes, "Mekomam shel ha-magiyah u-vaʿalei ha-shem be-ḥevrah ha-ashkenazit be-mifneh ha-meʾot ha-yud-zayin—ha-yud-ḥet," *Ẓion* LX (1995): 87–89.

136. Nigal, *Magic, Mysticism, and Hasidism*, 10–12. Nigal highlights the dualistic function of a *baʿal shem*: "two personalities are capable of dwelling within the same person: the personality of the Rav-Philosopher-Leader (and even *posek*) and the personality of a wonder-working *baʿal-shem*. Apparently, no one in that period thought that these two personalities were in any way contradictory; to the contrary, all believed that they could exist harmoniously within the same person," ibid., 20–21.

137. In her article on Rabbi Samuel Falk known as Baʿal Shem from London, Oron accurately highlights the *baʿal shem*'s constant strive for social leadership and his desire to use his magic practices with the aim of establishing himself socially. See Michal Oron, "Dr. Samuel Falk and the Eibeschuetz-Emden Controversy," 242–245. Also see Oron, *Mi-"baʿal shed" le-"baʿal shem."*

138. Rosman defines the common denominator of *baʿalei shem* as their "ability to employ magical techniques for manipulating the name or names of God to achieve practical effects in everyday life" and of their practice of "what was termed practical kabbalah." Rosman demonstrates the presence of *baʿalei shem* at various levels of society. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism,* 13–15, 17–19.

thematic parallels exist between Binyamin Beinish's *Sefer shem tov katan* and Hillel's *Sefer ha-ḥeshek* that deserve separate discussion. On the other hand, although he was not a town rabbi, Hillel resembles Hirsh Frankl from Shwabach (1662–1740). Like Frankl, Hillel suffered from persecutions and was deprived of the right to operate as *baʿal shem*. Frankl's book did not survive persecution, yet from its German rendering it is obvious that both Hillel and Frankl shared Manichean worldviews, were at home with evil powers, and were inclined to black magic and witchcraft.[139] Ultimately, Hillel resembles Israel ben Eliezer, the Besht, *before* the latter settled down ca. 1740 in Międzyboż as a *kahal*-supported mystic and magician.[140] Hillel and Israel Besht both were itinerant healers and practical kabbalists, neither was a rabbinic figure, and both were looking for a tenured position. We will speculate later whether the differences between them stemmed only from the fact that one (the Besht) was more successful in the communal market than the other (Hillel).

Like most of the East European kabbalists, referred to in *SH* as hasidim, Hillel Baʿal Shem was a classical pre-Beshtian hasid. He belonged to the generation of late- seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century mystics, who, as Gershom Scholem indicates, combined learning Kabbalah and practicing asceticism. Neither the Kuty kabbalistic circle nor the *kloiz* of Brody were mentioned in *SH,* yet Hillel's rigorous behavioral requirements seem to correspond fully with the patterns of personal conduct adopted by hasidim in Kuty, Brody, and other groups of East European pietists.[141] Moreover, *SH* may be used as a source for the pre-Beshtian Hasidism that provides detailed descriptions of hasidic mystical practices (*hanhagot*).[142] Hillel reiterates that ritual purity (*tevilah, tefilah ve-taharah*) is indispensable for a kabbalist engaged in holy work. Hillel meticulously describes when it is forbidden or allowed to write amulets. He introduces his peculiar calendar of "clean" and "unclean" days for those who are "modest." He designs a special calendar for oaths and damnations. He stresses that a person cannot be a true healer, *baʿal shem*, unless he is a true kabbalist, *baʿal sod*.[143]

According to Hillel's rites, a healer should pray with profound *kavanah*, alone, not necessarily with a quorum.[144] A week of abstinence and daily ritual

139. Gedalyah Nigal, *Baʿal-shem le-maʾasar ʿolam: Goralo ha-tragi shel ha-rav hirsh frankl* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1993), 11–16. Mention should be made of the dramatic difference between Hillel's Manichean usage of the evil powers and the idea of the transcended evil in Lurianic Kabbalah. See Isaiah Tishby, *Torat ha-raʿ ve-ha-kelipah be-kabalat ha-ʾari* (Jerusalem: Mifal ha-shikhpul, 1962).

140. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 63–82, 159–170.

141. See Yaakoẏ Ḥisday, "Eved ha-shem—be-doram shel avot ha-ḥasidut," *Ẓion* 47 (1982): 253–292; Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 119–142; Joseph Weiss, "Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism," 27–42; Rivka Shatz Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism: Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1993), 111–143; Abraham J. Heshcel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism*, ed. Samuel Dressner (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), esp. 4–14, 45–56, 113–151.

142. For an in-depth discussion of the books on hasidic behavioral patterns, see Gries, *Sifrut ha-hanhagot*.

143. *SH*, f. 2a, 105b, 153a, 154a, 314b.

144. *SH*, f. 62b. Cf. the personal conduct of the Besht who was reported to pray in the loneli-

ablutions are required for particular amulets. Writing the amulet requires pietistic conduct and a tranquil environment. The kabbalist should prepare an amulet in a clean room. He must be alone in this room. He should write an amulet on a fine parchment. There should be nobody else in the house: no ritually unclean women, no charlatans suspected of making forgeries, and, amazingly, no repentant sinners, *baʿalei teshuvah*.[145] Indeed, deliberate self-restraint from physical pleasures, the application of *kavvanot* and fasting before and after the performance make Hillel's conduct particularly close to the members of the pneumatic circles, predecessors of the Beshtian Hasidism.[146] However, in vain would one look in *SH* for such notions of the Beshtian Hasidism as *devekut.*[147] Nor does *SH* require concentration on the letters of the amulets.[148] Nor does one find in *SH*—except in traditional formulaic statements—an indication of its author's strong concern with communal redemption. Divine sparks have no place in the dark realms of *SH*—perhaps this is one of the reasons that in *SH* there are no traces of a joyous spirituality so characteristic of Beshtian Hasidism.

VII. Conclusions

Hillel was both a typical and an atypical *baʿal shem*. He was deeply immersed in a Manichean universe inhabited by powerful demons, evil spirits, *dybbuks*, and devils.[149] In his mind, these powers were ubiquitous, as in the *Weltanschauung* of the famous kabbalist Shimshon of Ostropolie (d. 1648), to whom Hillel refers, and in his nephew Yaʿakov ben Pesah's *Zevaḥ pesaḥ* (Żółkiew,

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ness of the Carpathian woods. See *Shivḥei ha-besht*, stories nos. 8 and 9; Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baʿal Shem Tov,* 18–23.

145. *SH*, f. 154a, 226b–227a, 331b. Hillel interprets literally the famous statement "in the place of the *baʿalei teshuvah* the righteous *ẓaddikim* are not able to stand." His interpretation follows R. Yohanan and not R. Avahu, see *Berakhot* 34b and Rashi ad loc. Interestingly enough, as in a number of other cases, here, too, Hillel seems to be arguing against crypto-sabbatean reading of classical sources, in this case, of the gemara. See, for instance, the sabbatean interpretation of *Berakhot 34b* that emphasizes the superiority of a *baʿal teshuvah* over *ẓaddik gamur,* in Naor, *Post Sabbatian Sabbatianism*, 22–25. However, in other cases Hillel inclines toward sabbatean ideas. Thus, for instance, he resorts to a sabbatean interpretation of the planet Saturn, which for the sixteenth-century kabbalist symbolized six profane days of the week and not Shabbat but for Shabbetai Tsevi and his followers came to symbolize Shabbat and Jubilee Year. See Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Shabbat in the Classical Kabbalah* (State University of New York Press, 1989), 198 and 240–241; Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (Yale: Yale University, 1998), 192–196; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, 430. At this point I think the question of Hillel's inconsistent crypto-Sabbateanism has to be left open.

146. The Besht was also stringent about rules of writing amulets. Cf. *Shivḥei ha-besht*, no. 187; Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baʿal Shem Tov*, 196–197.

147. On the importance of *devekut* in Hasidism, see Gershom Scholem, "*Devekut* as Communion with God," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 186–191, 206–211.

148. On the importance of contemplative and ecstatic practices in Hasidism, see Idel, *Hasidism*, 45 and 75.

149. It will be fruitful to compare (and differentiate) the worldview of Hillel and that of Abraham Yagel (1552–ca. 1623), an Italian-Jewish doctor, magician, and kabbalist who resorted to the work of Aristotle to prove the physical reality of demons. See David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 43–58.

1722), which Hillel often quotes.[150] Hillel's familiarity with and closeness to this world informs the second meaning of his title that I propose: the Master of an Evil Name. Hillel starts with making a *dybbuk* his only respectable interlocutor and ends by making evil powers predominant in his thinking. Hillel says, for instance, that any operation (*peʿulah*) that resembles a burnt offering (*ketoret*) should be forbidden because burnt offerings nurture demons; any imitation of the burnt offering will benefit evil powers.[151] To be on the safe side, one should not disturb evil, Hillel seems to argue. But should evil appear, Hillel's knowledge of how to control its advance would be crucial.

Again, the contrast with the Besht is illuminating. Having been rebuked for smoking his pipe, the Besht is reported to have replied that while smoking he thinks about the incense (*ketoret*) in the Temple. Through a *kavanah* mechanism he spiritualizes a suspicious habit, imagining himself serving God in the Temple and thus achieving a higher status of *devekut* (cleaving to God).[152] Besht came to be perceived as a pietist who mystically transforms evil, elevating human souls trapped in it.[153] In contrast, Hillel either engages with evil or keeps it at bay, but always is bound by evil names or an Evil Name, with which he magisterially operates and, perhaps, whose victim he becomes.[154]

150. On Shimshon and his worldview, see Yehuda Liebes, "Halom u-meẓiʾut: le-demuto shel ha-kadosh ha-mekubal r. shimshon mi-ostropolye," *Tarbiẓ* 52 (1982): 83–109. See *SH*, f. 42b.

151. *SH*, f. 229a. A particular predisposition of demons to the smell of incense is mentioned in various Jewish sources. For instance, in a Yiddish text on Yosef de la Reyna written in Amsterdam by crypto-Sabbatian Leib ben Ozer Rosenkrantz (d. 1727), the incense is depicted as a powerful remedy that helps demons to acquire additional power, break the chains that bind them, and liberate themselves. See Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), "Maʾaseh r. yosef de la reyna be-masoret ha-shabtait," in *Eder ha-yekar: divrei sifrut u-meḥkar mukdashim le-shmuel aba gorodetsky*, ed. Emanuel Bin-Gorion (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1947), 110–114. An episode in *Sefer ha-zohar*, *Parashat Terumah* depicts burnt offerings, the smell of which helps demons to cause nocturnal pollution to men. Although the Zoharic motif does not emphasize the direct impact of the incense on demons, it is functionally close to the incense/demon motif since it demonstrates the ability of evil angels to nurture themselves from the smell of the offerings (*korbanot*). See *Zohar* 2:130a.

152. For the Beshtian concept of the spiritual meaning and theurgical power of burnt offerings, see the discussion in Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 111. Sabbatians considered smoking tobacco one of the ways to neutralize evil powers. This behavioral pattern was later inherited by the Hasidim, who considered smoking the way to substitute incense offerings in the Temple. Mitnagdim, authors of anti-hasidic writings such as *Zamir ariẓim* and *Shever poshim,* were quick to depict and mock this hasidic custom. For a comprehensive list of sources on tobacco smoking among sabbatians and hasidim, see Gries, *Sifrut ha-hanhagot*, 205 n. 109. Louis Jacobs, however, considers smoking tobacco "peripheral" for the hasidim, see his "Tobacco and the Hasidim," *Polin* 11 (1998): 25–30.

153. See, e.g., the story about the Besht uplifting the soul of a man turned into a frog for disobeying Jewish legal practices and trapped by Satan, see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baʿal Shem Tov*, par. 12, p. 24–26; also see a story about the Besht neutralizing evil and uplifting the soul of a divorced and "loose" woman ready to convert out of Judaism, ibid., 245–247 par. 238. It is significant that the Besht made an attempt (though unsuccessful) to make a *tikkun* (correction) and uplift the spark of Shabbetai Tsevi, see ibid., par. 66, p. 86–87.

154. As far as the further development of Hillel's healing methods and the usage of the "holy and impure names" (*shemot ha-kedushah* and *shemot ha-tumʾah*), the eighteenth-century hasidic literature moved far away from "magic" to "mysticism," insisting on the predominance of spiritual rather

Hillel's life story and his book furnish a number of tricky questions. If one takes into consideration the crypto-sabbatean overtones of the notion "modest" in eighteenth-century East Europe, one might ask whether Hillel was only a pre-Beshtian Hasid, *ẓanuaʿ*, or also a repentant crypto-sabbatean.[155] Hillel mentions a number of times that he is "repenting." His repentance, *teshuvah,* could have been the confession not only of a *baʿal shem* who has had some spectacular failures but also of a crypto-sabbatean trying to come to grips with the Jewish community.[156] Indeed, for the purpose of exorcising *dybbuks*, that is to say, schismatics, there was nobody better than a former crypto-sabbatean: he knew the disease and was able to take care of it. From this vantage point it would be tempting to reassess the early-eighteenth-century *dybbuks* as schismatics and to reconsider exorcisms in the Polish-Jewish community in the context of the communal struggle against the crypto-sabbatean heresy and its ramifications. For example, before he left for the Land of Israel, R. Naftali Kaẓ from Posen, named in *SH* among prominent *baʿalei shem*, was reported to have met the Angel of Death in the disguise of a beggar.[157] But it is well-known that the "Angel of Death," *Malʾakh ha-mavet*, was the euphemism for the notorious sabbatean Hayyim Malakh used in all the bans of excommunications pronounced, repeated, and enforced in Central and East Europe against him and his followers.[158] Was R. Naftali Kaẓ using the language that was transparent for his contemporaries but obscure only for us? When Żółkiew, this uncrowned capital of the crypto-sabbateans, started an unparalleled publication of books by *baʿalei shem,* was that an attempt to combat the heresy or to disseminate it? At any rate, these speculations are particularly pivotal in view of the dramatic

than natural types of medicine. For example, analyzing the *Degel maḥaneh efraim* by Moshe Ephraim of Sudylków, the grandson of the Besht, Alan Brill observes that "In contrast to *baʿalei shem* literature, the Degel does not discuss demons or natural cures. Instead, the spiritual status of the *ẓaddik* is based on his connection to the inner light of the Torah and his sense of the Divine vitality within objects that cures and gives power over nature." See Brill's "The Spiritual World of the Master of Awe: Divine, Vitality, Theosis, and Healing in *Degel Mahaneh Ephraim*," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8 (2001): 27–65; the quotation is on p. 31.

155. While I leave this question open, I need to mention that one does not find in *SH* traces of a prophetic fervor, which, according to the recent research, was pivotal for the sabbateans. See Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

156. This is not to rule out the possibility of placing Hillel's *teshuvah* in the context of pietistic practices that were established by *ḥasidei ashkenaz* and subsequently informed much of pre-Beshtian hasidic rites. Cf. Yosef Dan, *Ḥasidut Ashkenaz* (Tel Aviv: Misrad ha-bitaḥon, 1992), 72–76. On the decisive impact of *ḥasidei ashkenaz* on the formation of the religious values of the early Polish-Jewish communities, see Israel Ta-Shma, "On the History of the Jews in Twelfth–Thirteenth Century Poland," *Polin* 10 (1997): 287–317.

157. Nigal, "Rav Naftali Kaẓ," 92.

158. On Haim Malakh, see Gershom Scholem, "Berukhiyah rosh ha-shabtaim be saloniki," *Ẓion* 6 (1941):119–147, esp. 123–24; idem., "Iggeret meʾet rabi Ḥayim Malakh," *Ẓion* 11 (1946): 168–174; idem., "Le movement sabbataïste en Pologne," *Revieu de l'histoire des religions* 143 (153): 209–220; idem., "Malakh, Hayim," *Ha-entsiklopedyah ha-ivrit* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Ḥevrah le-hotsaʾat entsiklopedyot, 1963), 23:524–525; *Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Malakh, Hayim ben Solomon"; Gershom Scholem, *Meḥkarim u-mekorot le-toldot ha-shabtaut ve-gilguleyah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1974), 100–109. Also, see Jan Doktór, *Śladami Mesjasza-Apostaty. Żydowskie ruchy mesjanhskie w XVII i XVIII wieku* (Wrocław: Leopoldinum, 1998), 70–71, 113–114.

demographic increase of *baʿalei shem* in East Europe at the turn of the eighteenth century—and their abrupt decrease at the end of the eighteenth century. One should not forget that it was an abundance, and not scarcity, of various types of *baʿalei shem* that irritated the author of *Sefer ha-ḥeshek* and made his ordeals bitter.

Hillel could have been irritated and even intimidated because he constantly felt the pressure from another type of his competitors, the so-called *feldshers* (originally, former barbers hired by the army to attend to the wounded soldiers and provide primary medical assistance, who at a later stage became paramedics). These semiprofessional doctors "with below university level education" rapidly grew in numbers in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Perhaps some of them turned to private practice in Eastern and Central Poland as soon as they left Jan Sobieski's army, which boasted quite a number of Jewish *feldshers*. Others could have migrated westward from Russia and left-bank Ukraine, where, in the 1710s, Peter the Great established at least fifty military garrison hospitals staffed with *feldshers* as well as special institutions for training them. Finally, some doctors could come from German lands where Jews, starting from 1721, were granted the right to study medicine at universities.[159] Hillel was one of the last early-modern itinerant kabbalists involved, to use Moshe Idel's parlance, in magic and mysticism; as such he was challenged from the one side by the rapid professionalization of the field of popular Kabbalah and from the other by the rising professionalization of popular medicine. *Feldshers* and doctors, and, late in the eighteenth century, new Beshtian Hasidim were slowly but steadily pushing old-fashioned healers such as Hillel out of the East European marketplace by making them altogether redundant.

Another reason that caused so many grievances to Hillel was perhaps the fact that Hillel was not a learned Talmudic scholar (*talmid ḥakham*). Hillel does not seem to have received a consistent rabbinic (*yeshivah*) education. He could hardly compete with rabbis and scholars who, in addition to their main occupation, practiced as exorcists and healers.[160] From this viewpoint, Hillel's failure obliquely explains the success of the Besht, who was no *talmid ḥakham* either. Yet the Besht, despite the attempts of the editors of *Shivḥei ha-Besht* to emphasize his divinely inspired knowledge and diminish his reputation as a rabbinic scholar, managed to set and accomplish a task the traces of which we do not find in *SH*. In his letter the Besht wrote to Gershon Kutover, his brother-in-law, the Besht attempted synthesizing midrashic references, Kabbalah, popular Judaic beliefs, theurgy, and magic in the framework of a mystically shaped prophetic vision. We are not able to look at the prose written by the Besht or at the letters composed by Hillel, but

159. See Edward Kossoy and Abraham Ohry, *The Feldshers: Medical, Sociological and Historical Aspects of Practitioners of Medicine with Below University Level Education* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 1992), 68–71, 135–36, 144–45; John M. Efron, *Medicine and the German Jews: a History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 60–61.

160. In his review of Rosman's book on the Baal Shem Tov, Gries mentioned that the status of *talmid ḥakham* was pivotal for a practicing *baʿal shem* eager to sell his amulets and healing remedies to his clientele. See his "Demuto ha-historit shel-ha-besht: bein sakin ha-minaṭeḥim shel ha-historiyon le-makḥelo shel ḥoker ha-sifrut," *Kabbalah* 5 (2000): 423.

in comparison with the somewhat clumsy and sometimes not very articulate Hillel, one may want to observe that from a literary perspective the Besht is more talented: he does look like a *talmid ḥakham* who is proficient in classical Hebrew sources and who mastered the style of a rabbinic epistle.

Finally, in the vein of a pure speculation, let us consider differences between Hillel Baʿal Shem and the Baʿal Shem Tov. Unlike Hillel, Israel ben Eliezer "was a *baʿal shem* par excellence, offering the promise of collective security for the entire House of Israel and not just magical defense for individuals or his own community."[161] Perhaps due to this strong commitment to the mystical, communal, and salvific—which we do not find in *SH*—Israel ben Eliezer became a charismatic personality, a sedentary *baʿal shem* supported by the community, and eventually, in the hasidic memory, the founder of the movement. This appraisal of the Besht has been further substantiated by the career of Hillel, who apparently never tried to transform magic, failed to establish himself in a Jewish community, and fell into oblivion.

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161. Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, 181. Rosman is right arguing that "[t]his was apparently one of the features of his activity that singled him out as a baʿal shem par excellence." Also see idem, "Innovative Tradition: Jewish Culture in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 551.